Understanding Motivations of Sector Switchers: 
Towards a Holistic Approach to Public Service Motivation Theory

by

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and approved by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS OF SECTOR SWITCHERS:
TOWARDS A HOLISTIC THEORY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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While public service motivation theory (PSM) has addressed numerous topics in the 30-plus years it has been a significant part of the public administration literature, several gaps in the literature are apparent. First, PSM has only recently begun to address the relationship between government partiality, which is at the center of PSM, with other prosocial modes of partiality, such as an interest in nonprofit work. Second, the issue of “sector switchers”—individuals who move from one employment sector to another over the course of their careers—has been significantly under-researched both as a general matter and with specific reference to motivation. Third, PSM research has been largely quantitative in character and may benefit from a rebalancing with qualitative methods.

This dissertation, an exploratory study, is a qualitative study of sector switchers. It uses phenomenologically oriented interviews with 50 such
individuals, selected in a purposeful sample, to add depth to an understanding of motivation to work in government as well as other prosocial realms. In so doing, the dissertation addresses a gap identified by one leading PSM researcher searching for more holistic approaches to public service motivation.

Themes emerged from the analysis and coding of interview data. Various motivations were identified for sectoral switches, including those based in compensation, a need for variety, a desire to serve, the enhancement of one’s professional skills, and the desire to advance one’s career. Further, while the study was exploratory and the sample was purposeful and not random, various trends seemed apparent, including the fact that sector switchers tend to undergo numerous switches and employment changes over the course of their careers and that, while they often move to the nonprofit sector later in their careers, they tend not to move to, or return to, government work.

Tentative conclusions include the identification of tensions between the abstract idea of service, often enunciated in a positive way by respondents, and neutral or negative views about government service, self-sacrifice, and working in a helping profession. A tension was also discerned between government work, which participants viewed more negatively, and nonprofit work, which participants tended to view more positively.
Acknowledgements and Dedication

I would like first to acknowledge several individuals who were instrumental in my completing this dissertation, a process I first began when enrolled as a doctoral student at SUNY-Albany in the late 1970s.

I left SUNY without completing the dissertation, moving to Washington, D.C. on a Congressional Fellowship in 1978. When I did, my advisor and mentor, the late Abdo Baaklini, said to me in his thick Lebanese accent that he knew for sure that I would be seduced like so many others by the lure of a professional life but that he knew me—that I was at heart an educator, and that one day I would complete the doctoral degree and return to education. For several decades I thought he was wrong, but now I think he was right. I wish he were still with us for lots of reasons, including seeing the smile on his face as I finished.

I would also like to acknowledge Steve Diner, Chancellor, and Marc Holzer, Dean of the School of Public Affairs and Administration, both of Rutgers-Newark. Steve first suggested that I complete the degree, and that I do so at Rutgers. I am very thankful for the advice. Marc was extraordinarily helpful to a candidate with so many years away from academia and has been a constant source of support and encouragement, right through this dissertation.

My brother Ken has also been an inspiration. While I began my studies in public administration, a year before he did, I started my trek between sectors not too long afterward while he stayed in the field. For over 30 years he has truly
climbed the high mountains, both academic and professional, in public administration. His dedication, ethics, and hard work have always been beacons.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. My wife Pat has supported me every step of the way, even when maybe it didn’t seem like such a great idea to be trading a professional career for academics with three young kids. If I could etch this dedication in stone I would do so for her, since she has been there for me.

But I dedicate this work as well to those three kids—Miles, Amber, and Alexandra. I am proud of them in every way, including (but not limited to) their success in school. Here’s hoping they see me as a good example of following one’s dream.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my parents. My mother passed away not long after I left SUNY, and I know how much she wanted me to finish the degree. I am especially thankful to my father, who passed away just last year. Though he himself never finished high school, and though he never told me that news until the very day I graduated from college, he was steadfast in his desire to see his two sons succeed academically. Degree or no degree, I hope I can be half the inspiration to my kids about education that he was to me.

Jeffrey Apfel
March 2011
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“Much can be learned about public service
by listening to people who perform it.”

Concluding statement from
“Individual Conceptions of Public Service Motivation”
Gene A. Brewer, Sally Coleman Selden, and Rex L. Facer II

“[Phenomena] have something to say to us — this is common knowledge
among poets and painters. Therefore, poets and painters are born
phenomenologists. Or rather, we are all born phenomenologists. . . ”

From Researching Lived Experience, Max Van Manen
Chapter One

Background

Not much is known about the motivations of sector switchers—individuals who are not committed to the public sector for their entire careers. Additionally, little effort has been made to relate such motivations to the broader concept of public service motivation (PSM), an area of study that has tended to view motivation through a very specific governmental lens. And, relative to this lens, little work has been done to explore the relationship between PSM’s government service focus and the motivation to engage in prosocial activities in the increasingly important nonprofit sector.

These gaps are noteworthy, considering that 1) sector switching has been identified as a key characteristic of the new public service environment and 2) the growth of the nonprofit sector in terms of finances and employment has been so significant over the past several decades (Wing, Pollak, & Blackwood, 2008).

James Perry, one of the architects of PSM theory, recently sought to update Frederick Mosher’s famous reconciliation of democracy and public service (Mosher, 1982) by looking to reconcile democracy and the “new public service” (Perry, 2007), an entity that includes higher levels of sector switching along with other, related characteristics discernible in the literature: a blurring of lines between sectors in the delivery of services (Light, 1999), boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994), and networked governance (Bigwharfe, 2001).
This dissertation will argue that PSM theory will benefit from an approach that takes into account some of the new dimensions mentioned above. Furthering this thinking, the dissertation addresses three main points:

1) **PSM, which has to date been largely positivist and quantitative, has also been called upon to develop more “holistic” approaches, and this effort will be well served by the use of qualitative methods in an appropriate fashion.**

While the idea of motivation to serve and the related concept of a public service ethic have long histories and have employed interpretative approaches, the field since 1990 has strongly emphasized quantitative methods, with an orientation toward explanation rather than interpretation. Recently, several scholars prominent in PSM research have called for a more “holistic” approach. This dissertation both endorses that call and suggests a specific plan for research.

In addition to the general benefit associated with a balance between quantitative and qualitative approaches, a literature review also finds several specific rationales for a rebalancing with qualitative methods.

2) **The needed holistic dimension in PSM theory will be supported by a qualitative focus on the underanalyzed area of sector switchers.**

This dissertation is an exploratory study using phenomenologically oriented interviews with sector switchers. In-depth interviews concerning how these individuals have constructed meaning relative to their careers are likely to add richness and depth to existing theory and to suggest new avenues of research.
3) **Sector switchers will be an ideal group with which to address a broadening of PSM’s focus to include an understanding of the relationship not only between the private and public sectors but also the increasingly important nonprofit sector.**

While PSM addresses the general question of “non-self-regarding behaviors,” its main focus has been on the partiality of individuals to government service per se and not to other mission-based organizations. As I will outline later, this focus likely reflects the historical conditions under which PSM emerged: it emerged within the field of public administration, and its character was formed in part because of the part it played in within-the-field debates over the proper role of government.

At the same time, though, the growth and increasing importance of nongovernmental mission-based entities over the period of time that the PSM literature has developed has been much remarked on (Urban Institute, 2006; Cain, 2010). Yet PSM researchers have on only a few occasions sought to understand the relationship of the government partiality at the heart of PSM with kindred kinds of mission partiality. That nonprofit mission partiality appears to be growing, especially among young people (Matchan, 2011), while trust in government remains at historic lows (Pew Research Center, 2010) ought to be a cause for concern among those interested in building a better and stronger public service.

In summary, through the development of the three themes above, comprising
1) a qualitative approach
2) to the motivations of individuals who have switched
3) between the private, public, and nonprofit sectors,

the objective of this study is to expand the scope of PSM, providing new concepts and allowing new theoretical directions to be taken.

A Note on Definition of Terms

Public service motivation, known also in its capitalized acronym form PSM, refers to a literature within the field of public administration dealing with, among other things, whether and how individuals are motivated toward public service. Perry and Wise’s definition, while hardly doctrinal, has been enormously influential and can usefully be cited here at the outset: PSM can be thought of as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368) 1.

This area of inquiry is about 20 years old, and essentially dates back to the 1990 article from which the above definition was taken. However, in a more general sense, the idea has an ancient pedigree, drawing from social and social-scientific concepts that long predate its first formal articulation. People have engaged in altruistic, duty-based, or other non-self-regarding behavior for as long as human culture has existed. In fact, one might even argue that mankind has emphasized and practiced collective obligation, duty, and community for far longer than it has emphasized the primacy of the individual. In the current era, in

1. This definition is a useful one at the outset, especially because PSM scholars have relied on it regularly from 1990 until the current day (Kim, 2006; Vandenabeele, 2006; Houston, 2006; Steen, 2009). However, as will be made clearer further on, it is a contention of this dissertation that the concept has undergone some subtle but important changes over time.
which the individual is primary, we are ironically compelled to explain how it is that some people exhibit non-self-regarding behavior, as though the default condition of mankind is individualism. Given our long evolutionary history in groups, one can easily argue that it is the more recent emphasis on the individual that requires explanation, and that there is nothing more “natural” than the non-self-regarding behaviors that have been theorized to comprise the core of PSM\(^2\).

What distinguishes PSM is the public, including the public-sector, nature of the concept. PSM does not just entail duty to those in the same nation or feelings of compassion for those in need, though it is generally viewed as mining those impulses. Since the concept grew up in public administration, it has been linked in the main (though not exclusively) to conceptions specifically of government, and grows out of a desire to support an ethic of public service (Perry & Wise, 1990; Perry, 1996).

It should also be noted at the outset that PSM has a narrow meaning relative to individuals and a broader meaning relative to a more complex public administration literature. When psychologists discuss motivation, the focus is generally on the individual. Even though key researchers such as Perry have questioned the individualistic bias of motivation theory (Perry, 2000), the initial

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2. A continuing theme of this dissertation will be the incorporation, where possible, of ideas from the emerging literature of evolutionary psychology, in part to meet a recent call issued by a prominent evolutionist to “take the evolution challenge” (Wilson, 2010). This challenge is based on the view that what Daniel Dennett has called the “universal acid” of Darwinian thinking (1996) eats away relentlessly at most human endeavors, including academic disciplines, and that most disciplines will benefit from incorporating evolutionary insights in appropriate ways. So this is a good place to note that the concepts of altruism underlying PSM have been the subject of much evolutionary thought over the past several decades, dating back to the contributions of Robert Trivers on reciprocal altruism in the 1970s (1971), a thread of research that has spawned a great deal of inquiry (reviewed by Trivers, 2006; Ridley, 1997) that should be useful to those interested in PSM.
use of the term applied to individuals, with the term PSM denoting a theorized set of personal attributes that prompt individuals to be attracted to and/or retained by the public service. The literature has continued this focus, with the attributes generally emphasizing altruism and connected non-self-regarding concepts such as humanitarianism, duty, patriotism, and communitarianism.

But PSM has broader foci as well. As the field of public administration incorporated motivational concepts from psychology, it by necessity needed to reshape such concepts in line with the concerns of the adopting field. As a result, in the public administration research undertaken under the PSM flag, the object of inquiry has not only been the individual but also organizations comprised by individuals (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007); the systemic relation between the two, or “fit” (Moynihan & Pandey, 2008; Wright & Pandey, 2008); the idea that the field has to “bring society in” (Perry, 2000); and other related concepts.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Prior to a review of the PSM literature, some overview comments should be made about PSM's hybrid nature and the implications of this hybrid nature on the scope of the literature to be surveyed. Following this overview, the literature of PSM will be reviewed, with specific emphasis on some of the key articles that remain influential. The literatures of other topical areas with bearings on this study (sector switching and careers) will then be examined.

Overview

The “M” in PSM finds its home not in the world of government and administration but in social psychology. In the most general sense, those interested in motivation want to know why people do what they do rather than something else or nothing at all. One person leaves a church as his neighbor joins one. One student pursues a degree in engineering while another studies the classics. One young professional actively seeks a career in marketing while another opts to be a social worker.

Each of the choices above poses social-psychological questions of motivation. But only the last one poses a question related to PSM. PSM’s domain links the social-psychological “M” (for motivation) with a needed “P” (for public). As such, it is a kind of hybrid area of inquiry, albeit one in which public administration has been the dominant party.
When more than one field willingly opens itself to connections with others, the question always arises as to what the relationship consists of. Is one side dominant? Or is it a question mostly of lenses? As Holtorf (2007) suggests in connection with the relation between archaeology and cultural anthropology, the answer often depends on the person being asked the question. Archaeologists tend to see questions of cultural behavior through the prism of archeological methods and history, and vice versa. Further, while the attempt to transcend boundaries is often worthwhile, considering the possible payoffs and the inevitably complex world we study, linking two or more fields is a difficult endeavor.

In large part this is because “fields” and the “literatures” that make them up are not static things, despite the mind’s tendency to perceive them in that fashion. As Hyland and Bondi (2006) point out,

Scholarly discourse is not a single uniform and monolithic entity differentiated merely by specialist topics and vocabularies. Instead it has come to be regarded as an outcome of a multitude of practices and strategies, where argument and engagement are crafted within communities that have different ideas about what is worth communicating, how it can be communicated, what readers are likely to know, how they might be persuaded, and so on.

If considered through the lens of social psychology, PSM could be thought of as being simply about one specific venue in which the social-psychological concept of motivation is played out. To the community of social psychologists, the public venue in which PSM can be located is of less interest than the different ways in which motivation itself can be understood. And indeed, there exists a robust discourse in that community dealing with motivation per se, when that
concept is placed at the center of things. However, PSM did not grow up in the community of social psychologists. While it drew from that literature, the area itself grew up as part of the discourse associated with the field of public administration. Therefore, one can expect, per Hyland and Bondi, that PSM will for the most part be preoccupied with the “arguments and engagements” of the field of public administration.

Accordingly, in line with the main focus of this dissertation, the literature will be examined in part to establish the “arguments and engagements” its scholars were making in the community of public administration. We will want to ask what “motivated” PSM scholars to make the arguments they made, rather than focusing on something else. This will involve not only a summary of research findings, but some interpretation based on a reading of the author’s words as well as historical context.

The PSM Literature

In 1963 W. Lloyd Warner and his coauthors wrote *The American Federal Executive*, a book that evidenced the authors’ desire to build a stronger public service ethic through a better understanding of what motivated federal civil servants to be part of the government. Their method was quantitative when it came to identifying external characteristics of such managers, but when their attention turned to values, personality, and motivation, their method was qualitative. To paraphrase the later researchers into the idea quoted above (Brewer, Selden, & Facer, 2000, p. 262), Warner and his coauthors “listened to the people who perform public service.”
Over the following 15 to 20 years, research into this area of motivation slowed (Crewson, 1997). However, it picked up substantially after the publication in 1990 of Perry and Wise’s seminal “The Motivational Bases of Public Service” (hereinafter termed “the 1990 article”). After this time the focus of research shifted significantly, moving into the quantitative orientation it possesses to this day.

In terms of understanding the foundational aspects of PSM, the 1990 article, which was essentially an exercise in theory building, is often read in conjunction with Perry’s follow-on article (Perry, 1996; hereinafter termed “the 1996 article”), in which he sought to operationalize PSM under a four-fold dimension such that research could proceed. These two articles in effect spawned a broad set of inquiries.

The articles were influential, but they did not rigidly or inflexibly set the terms for debate through the current era. Other scholars have altered the conceptual structure or emphasized some aspects to a greater extent than others, and Perry himself has not marched in lockstep to his views of 15 or 20 years ago. Yet, more than most seminal articles, these two papers have proven extremely durable in terms of the influence and persistence of the original frameworks outlined. Much (though not all) of PSM research since 1990 has been an extended elaboration on Perry and Wise’s original formulation, especially Perry’s 1996 article operationalizing the term1.

1. See Brewer (2009) for a thorough discussion.
Because these two articles did so much to set the terms of the discussion over the past 20 years, the literature review will focus first on a close reading of them, moving on to examine the development of the literature of PSM from 1990 through the current day.

**The 1990 and 1996 Articles**

The initial 1990 formulation by Perry and Wise was essentially a theoretical exercise, an attempt to articulate a reasonable and workable theory that might subsequently be subjected to formal analysis. As such, it drew from a long history of inductive reasoning that is associated with real-world disciplines like public administration, in which cases and problems are often the genesis of theoretical insight.

Perry and Wise did not undertake a full review of the literature of psychology as they sought to link their public administration concerns with motivation. The linkage they made was to Knoke and Wright-Isak’s description of motivation as the individual’s desire to address deficiencies or meet needs, as well as their breakdown of motivation into three components: the rational, the norm-based, and the affective (1982). Having anchored motivation in this fashion, Perry and Wise then moved past psychology into public administration, seeking to link the two worlds. But instead of basing their transitional thinking on lived experiences, they opted to tap selectively into various public administration

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2. In light of this paper’s desire to examine potential links to evolutionary thinking, it is also interesting to note that Perry and Wise (as well as later scholars) tapped into a literature of social psychology that was only beginning to shed its nature as what Trivers calls “pre-Darwinian.” According to Trivers, “Social psychology saw that ‘prosocial tendencies were important in life but failed to see any problem in how they evolved (indeed, did not even raise the question) and therefore failed to differentiate between obvious subcategories such as kin-directed versus reciprocal altruism. Evolutionary theory had nothing to offer beyond group selection and general inattention” (Trivers, 2006, p. 68).
writings (often quite prescriptive) from Leonard White to Anthony Downs to H. George Frederickson, looking to connect public administration thinking with the three-part schema posited.

Perry and Wise defined PSM as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (1990, p. 368). Further, the authors hypothesized that:

1) The desire on the part of an individual to be part of a public organization will be higher as the individual’s PSM is higher,
2) PSM will be positively related to performance in public organizations, and
3) Organizations with high PSM membership will depend less on extrinsic rewards such as financial incentives to incent performance (1990, pp. 370–371).

Two aspects of Perry and Wise’s article warrant a closer look: first, their use of Knoke and Wright-Isak’s three-way schema; second, how they chose to move from these three psychological categories to ideas with direct application to public administration.

Starting with the first question, what should be made of Perry’s reliance on Knoke and Wright-Isak’s three-part schema, categorizing impulses into one of three buckets: rational, norm-based, or affective? At the outset, it must be noted that this categorization follows a much-remarked-upon “rule of threes” whereby many types of human phenomena seem to break out into three parts evidencing very similar tensions. Indeed, where many human traits are concerned, three-
way breakouts are nearly identical at a deep level and can often be mapped onto one another quite easily. Harold Laswell remarked as long ago as the 1930s (Lasswell, 1932; also see Cohen, 1997) that Freudian conceptions of ego, superego, and id coincide quite well with the three branches of government proposed by the framers (executive, judicial, and legislative, respectively). Both of these in turn map perfectly over a three-way motivational schema emphasizing the rational (ego, executive), norm-based (superego, judicial), and affective (id, legislative)3.

It is tempting to think that it is less that the world tends to break out, like all Gaul, into three parts, and that there may be something about our cognitive structure that prompts us to think in terms of three. In fact, in evolutionary science Paul McLean has posited the idea of a “triune brain” (1990). Under this view, the brain can be functionally divided into “a part related to habits and instinctive behavior, a part related to emotional and social behavior, and a part related to higher cognitive and semantic processing” (Levine & Jani, 2002), with each part having developed through the evolution of the species. This three-part structure is not only tied to evolutionary theory, but also rhymes quite nicely not only with Freud and the framers, but Knoke and Wright-Isak as well.

Whether or not McLean’s views hold up as more than metaphor, it remains the case that a rule of three in which the respective domains are instinct, conscience, and reason is common in human endeavors. In relying on Knoke

3. There are many other “rule of three” candidates for mapping, such as Aristotle’s three types of argument (Ethos/appeal to ethics (which maps to norm-based), Pagos/appeal to emotions (which maps to affective) and Logos/appeal to logic (which maps to rational)—to say nothing of the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion, and the Scarecrow.
and Wright-Isak’s three-way conception, Perry and Wise may have been doing no more than conceptualizing motivation for their purposes in line with a well-established rule of three that tends to mirror universal human tensions.

But then how well do Perry and Wise follow through on coming up with specific operational concepts that properly embody this three-way split? The question is a significant one. Given the extent to which the 1990 and 1996 articles influenced later research, much depends on the authors’ initial thinking. Recent authors (including Perry) have cited “gaps” in the PSM literature and have questioned the initial dimensionalities of the field’s articulation (Brewer, 2009, p. 4).

**The Three-Way Schema in the 1990 Article**

Beginning with the 1990 article, Perry and Wise held that the rational aspect aligns with individual utility maximization. That seems correct, especially if one holds to the “rule of three” discussion above to the effect that the rational aspect maps onto ego (psychology) and the executive branch (government). Yet one can question whether Perry and Wise’s elaboration of the rational impulse into a specific attribute follows from the implications of the term. One might expect, for instance, that the rational would here be the occasion to introduce aspects of what has sometimes been termed “public sector motivation” (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008, p. 3), such as attractive benefits, work-life balance, and job security. But these clearly rational (e.g., individual utility maximization) attributes

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4. It seems to take until 2008 for “public sector motivation” to receive clear articulation. In the introduction to the book they edited reviewing the state of the PSM field, Perry and Hondeghem cite the presence of “public sector motivation,” drawing a distinction between this second “PSM” and the PSM that was the subject of the book.
are essentially ignored in the 1990 and 1996 articles—as they are throughout much of the PSM literature that follows.

Directly after acknowledging that the rational aspect ought to denote utility maximization, Perry and Wise jumped to a question posed by Stephen Kelman about why people enter government, citing Kelman's answer that some may be attracted in order to help fashion good public policy. Why they made this jump, and why such obvious rational motives as benefits and job security were ignored, is not clear. People may differ on the balance between non-self-regarding and self-regarding motivations (such as compensation or job security) in the public sector, but it is clear that the latter exists, and that by some accounts is more powerful than non-self-regarding motivations.

Further, when discussing how they interpreted "attraction to policy making," Perry and Wise did not mention the rational aspects of policy making stressed by Kelman and pointed to the fact that policy making can be "exciting, dramatic, and reinforcing of an individual's image of self-importance." This seems true on the face of it—it is hard to deny that the urge for power has animated more than one public servant's career. But then why was this deemed "rational" and not, say, "affective"?

In turn, when one turns to how the authors initially made "affective" specific, the authors, per the above, did not consider the desire for power and related darker lusts but lighted instead on a much softer concept: "the patriotism

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5. Lewis and Frank concluded recently in an analysis of General Social Survey data that "job security may still be the strongest attraction to government jobs, but high income and the ability to be useful to society also attract some Americans to the public sector" (2002).
of benevolence,” later reframed in 1996 as “compassion.” No explanation was given as to why questions of, say, power and control were ignored.

As to why compassion should be the sole affective candidate, the authors relied on Luther Gulick’s belief in the “nobility” of the public service and Frederickson and Hart’s contention that the “central motive for public service should be the patriotism of benevolence” (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 369; emphasis mine). Perry and Wise had many affective considerations to choose from but seem to have selected only compassion. Further, they do not seem to have based this on affective considerations (i.e., on what might actually animate the emotions of actual people) but rather on what they viewed as proper conceptions of duty and ethics—a norm-based rationale for the affective component.

Perry and Wise might have opted not to draw from norm-based accounts such as Gulick’s but instead from other sources. Take, for instance, Harold Laswell’s schema, under which he related categories of human institutions to the human values that drive them (2009, p. 17). Under this schema, which related wealth to business and rectitude to church, government was held to be driven by power—hardly a new or astonishing concept, given Madison’s own dictum to the effect that the essence of government is power.

Here, I contend that the authors may have to some extent conflated fact and value, an omnipresent risk in a field like public administration that inevitably mixes the two⁶. The idea of a public service ethic has great appeal as a

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⁶. Steen and Rutgers (2009) have also noted the fact that certain key PSM texts conflate what they term “instrumental” and “substantial” perspectives. They write of Perry and Hondeghem’s recent book-length treatment of the field (2008) that “they [Perry and Hondeghem] confess their interest in public service motivation to be grounded in a deep commitment to the values of the
normative concept but, as discussed previously, it is compatible with a view of humans as either noble or, alternatively and as in Madison’s view, self-interested. It puts the cart before the horse, and confuses fact and value, to draw from norm-based concepts like those discussed by Gulick, Frederickson, and Hart and use them to operationalize terms intended to describe what is.

The contention made here, then, is that from the outset Perry and Wise chose to avoid operationalizing rational, affective, and duty-based motives in ways that were not in concert with their conception of what public service should be about. Further, it seems likely, given that the authors have repeatedly framed their conception as opposed to things like public choice, public management, and incentive pay, that their reasoning, per Mercier and Sperber’s logic (2009), is indicative of a within-the-field argument.

The Three-way Schema in the 1996 Article

Having operationalized the terms conceptually in the manner described in the 1990 article, the results flowed through the 1996 article’s effort to operationalize the term for measurement purposes, in particular the effort to construct items for a scale that would properly capture the spirit of the 1990 article’s conceptual arguments.

In so doing, Perry made a number of changes. As discussed above, “patriotism of benevolence” was renamed “compassion”—a subtle but meaningful shift. The former carries with it the notion of duty expressed by Frederickson and Hart, while the latter is a much more interior, emotive term. As such, it makes public service, yet have a primarily instrumental focus when outlining their interest in managing people in organizations.”
the transition properly to “affective” despite its norm-based justification, though why it is the only affective factor remains unclear.

Further, while the 1990 article used Knoke and Wright-Isak’s three-way schema to come up with parallel three-way operationalizations, when it came to making scales in 1996 additional categories were added, such as self-sacrifice. As Coursey and Pandey noted in their effort to simplify Perry’s 1996 scale (2007), the rationale for departing from the Knoke and Wright-Isak supporting theory is not clear.

Last, and perhaps most important, the choice of scale items also reveals gaps similar to the ones discussed in connection with the 1990 article. As Coursey and Pandey noted, some items may simply be measuring the wrong thing. They cited Perry’s item on compassion asking respondents about whether they are able to contain their feelings when they see someone in distress. Does this measure compassion, or merely one’s ability to control one’s emotions (2007)?

A more critical gap, however, occurs in connection with creating scale items for “attraction to policy making.” It was argued previously that “rational” involves utility maximization, that Perry and Wise elided past certain obvious candidates when considering the rational component, and that attraction to policy making as Perry and Wise described was as much affective (“exciting, dramatic”) as rational. But then how is the item framed in measurement terms? While in

7. Accordingly, Coursey and Pandey suggested a three-dimension model so that the scales will have a better fit with the supporting theory (2007).
1990 this item was described in terms of excitement and drama, it was in 1996 converted into a series of statements designed to express the traditional public administration view of the legitimacy of the people, expressed via elected officials through to the bureaucracy. Respondents were asked whether politics is a dirty word, whether they cared for politicians, and whether they valued the give-and-take aspect of policy making. Respondents scored higher on attraction to policy making if they supported the traditionalist view that legitimacy comes from the top, and that, by implication, they are there to implement. So not only can one question the 1990 articulation of what comprises the rational component, but in addition once it was defined as “attraction to policy making” it was morphed again into a series of questions about bureaucratic legitimacy.

In a sense this segue may not be surprising. If Perry’s underlying philosophical orientation was in favor of traditional public administration as against the New Public Management (NPM), it would follow that he would articulate a more traditional approach in favor of bureaucracy and against the kind of corporate-style organization that NPM might endorse. But how does it follow that this is the proper way to measure “attraction to policy making” and, in turn, a “rational” approach?

The contention made here is that this flow-through of unclear assumptions can be followed back to how Perry and Wise opted to jump from the Knoke and Wright-Isak schema to public administration concepts that embodied them. First, there was no clear justification provided for selecting the operationalizations chosen. Second, they do appear to be in line with the author's philosophy
(altruism to be supported, self-interest to be downplayed), and so can be questioned as a kind of “taking sides in social research” (Hammersley, 2000).

Last, and most important from the point of view of this dissertation, though Perry and Wise used focus groups after the original conceptualization, they did not base their concepts on direct qualitatively framed accounts of public servants’ views.

Further PSM Research

Scholars, drawing substantially from Perry and Wise’s initial formulation, have examined PSM from a variety of different perspectives. One set of research threads concerned whether PSM exists (Houston, 2000; Brewer & Selden, 2000; Gabris & Simo, 2001), including questions of whether the concept has been properly operationalized and whether the measurement items might be revised for greater explanatory power (Coursey & Pandey, 2007).

Another set of threads has assumed PSM’s existence under the general measurement approach outlined by Perry (1996) but then moved on to measure the concepts in relation to other things. Some threads have concerned themselves with Perry and Wise’s three earliest hypotheses (1990, pp. 370-371): that (a) the desire on the part of an individual to be part of a public organization will likely be higher the higher the individual’s PSM (Rainey, 1982; Lewis & Frank, 2002), (b) PSM will likely be positively related to performance in public organizations (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Bright, 2005), and (c) organizations with high PSM membership will likely depend less on extrinsic rewards such as financial incentives to incent performance (Perry & Porter, 1982).
Other threads have treated PSM as a dependent variable and asked what independent variables might have acted as antecedents—e.g., can we know what “causes” PSM as a measurable phenomenon within individuals? Can we distinguish between PSM as something brought by individuals to an employment context versus PSM as something fostered within a specific employment context (Pandey & Stazyk, 2008; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Paine, 2009)?

Another set of directions taken by researchers has involved linking PSM to other important public administration concepts to explore their relationships. Thus, work has been undertaken examining the gender dimensions of PSM (De Hart-Davis, Marlowe, & Pandey, 2006), on linking PSM to ethics concerns in the field (Brewer, 2009; Choi, 2009; Maesschalck, van der Wal, & Hubers, 2008; Maesschalck, 2004), and on whether PSM has application in international contexts (Vanenabeele et al., 2009; Vandenabeele & Ban, 2009; Chow et al., 2009; Lee & Lee, 2009; Kim & Vandenabeele, 2009; Ritz, 2009). Scholars have also investigated PSM and the concept of organizational citizenship (Crewson, 1997; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007).

Two very important research threads are suggested by the historical context and the assumed distinction between public service and private employment. The former consideration has led to the production of a number of articles directly or indirectly contrasting PSM (and its tie to a more traditionalist strain of public administration) and New Public Management (Olsen, 2006; Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastowm, & Tinkler, 2006; Riccucci, 2001; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2001; Maesschalck, 2004; Rayner, 2009). The latter consideration
has led to the production of a number of articles concerned with the distinction between public and private. Are there important differences between the sectors? Is there a distinction between them under which the notion of a public service ethic gains moral and operational traction? Or are the distinctions more task-based, or collapsing and blurring for other reasons? (Rainey, 2000; Boyne, 2002; Bellante & Link, 1981; Jurkiewicz, Massey, & Brown, 1998; Houston, 2009; Andersen, 2009; Blank, 1985; Frank, 2004; Lewis & Frank, 2002).

Given that one of the key rationales for the field is that its insights can be used to build a better public service, surprisingly little has been written that deals specifically with integrating PSM into real-world settings so as to achieve a desired real-world effect. Recent contributions to this literature have been made by Paarlberg, Perry, and Hondeghem (2008) and by Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010).

Another class of articles has aspired to synthesize and compare. Some have opted to review the field itself at various points (Crewson, 1997; Perry, Hondeghem, & Wise, 2010; Perry & Hondeghem, 2008), have undertaken historical synthesis (Horton, 2008), or have analyzed PSM’s relation to its “near kin” in other behavioral fields (Koehler & Rainey, 2008).

*The Nonprofit Connection*

More recently, scholars have started examining the relation of PSM (a term forged in the context of government per se) with nonprofit employment that can often be based on similar altruistic and duty-based concepts (Park & Word, 2009; Steen, 2008). The articles written exploring this dimension are few in
number but make a powerful argument relative to the focus of this dissertation: that given the rise of nonprofits, PSM can no longer profitably consider itself as being connected only to government service.

According to the title of Steen’s article, government’s business (and by implication PSM itself) is no longer a “government monopoly” (2008). In turn, Park and Word make the case quite clearly:

In recent years, public service has been broadened to include not only those working directly for government but also other forms of employment that serve the community. This has manifested in an increasing interest in governance rather than government . . . and complex interrelationships between nonprofits and governments. Increasingly individuals who wish to serve their communities choose between the public and nonprofit sectors or even move between the sectors over the span of their careers. Traditionally, public administration literature has thought of public service in terms of work for or with a governmental agency . . . but more recent literature suggests that the transfer of services from the public to the nonprofit and for-profit sectors means that those serving the public may be employed in a variety of places and organizations not traditionally examined in public administration literature. (2009)

Park and Word go on to make another statement that is highly relevant to the research conducted here, as well as to why I believe the approach I have taken is a useful one. They write:

It is also important to examine and uncover any possible differences in terms of motivation between managers in these two sectors which might help policy makers find more effective means to deliver public services by taking advantage of motivational differences. (2009)

Accordingly, as will be described in greater detail in the Methodology section, I have chosen to interview individuals whose career paths can include private sector, public sector and/or nonprofit work. I will also be attentive to the increasingly blurred lines between these sectors. Some occupants of government and nonprofit jobs consider them essentially businesses, some for-
profit entities accomplish mission-related or even purely governmental work, and some individuals in these organizations may think of their jobs more in terms of mission than profit.

From the above review it is apparent how much ground PSM has covered in the last 20 years. In this regard, it is worth noting again that (a) the area has been largely analytic and positivistic in its orientation and has focused more on establishing explanatory relations than drawing from an interpretive tradition, and (b) where measurement is concerned, while the 1990 and 1996 articles have not quite dictated the agenda, they have been remarkably resilient (Perry, 2010) and warrant the more detailed treatment given here in the literature review.

**Historical Considerations**

The 1990 article, which proved foundational for subsequent research through today, was written near the outset of a long struggle within the field of public administration, one still not concluded or fully resolved, between older conceptions of public service and newer ones of public management. Perry and Wise consciously situated their work on the public service side in distinction to emerging concepts from the New Public Management movement. Perry and Wise described both the emerging scholarly interest in public choice theory and the then-current practical interest in financial incentives in the public service as “stand(ing) in opposition to the view that public service motives energize and direct the behavior of civil servants” (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 367).

Perry and Wise’s conception allowed for a great deal of valuable research to proceed, much of it, as noted, quantitative, on the range of non-self-regarding
behaviors animating public servants. Yet given how explicitly Perry and Wise and other researchers have framed the distinction with NPM, a deep reading of the literature is not required to conclude that much PSM research has been part of a larger argument within the public administration community.

The contention to be made here is that this historical aspect may have led to certain overemphases and underemphases\(^8\). Rational elements of behavior were faint even in Perry and Wise’s 1990 account, as we have sought to demonstrate. Today, they are even less visible, with PSM essentially coming to stand for altruism and related concepts. Further, because of the explicit linking of PSM to the desirability of a broad public service ethic, PSM has tended to stress government service as one big thing to which individuals may be attracted. As a result, it has not been as effective as it could be in understanding differences in tasks within government, differences occasioned by hierarchical levels in organizations and the often fuzzy overlap in work cultures between public service and the private sector to which PSM often serves as a contrast. It also has not fully addressed the rise of the nonprofit sector, which depends on similar altruistic motivations existing in an arguably purer form because many nonprofits lack many of the “rational” incentives that government work possesses.

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8. The emerging literature of evolutionary psychology has a good deal to say about how and why human reasoning, which includes reasoning undertaken as academic work, gives rise to cognitive biases and errors in systemic ways. Mercier and Sperber (2009) have hypothesized that reasoning is not intended from an evolutionary perspective to “improve knowledge and make better decisions,” as we often assume, but that its adaptive function is “argumentative.” They asserted that reasoning’s evolutionary intent “is to devise and evaluate arguments intended to persuade. Reasoning so conceived is adaptive given human exceptional dependence on communication and vulnerability to misinformation” (p. 3). See also in this regard the emerging literature of behavioral economics, including research into systemic error, influenced by evolutionary psychology (Ariely, 2008).
This dissertation contends that some of the above deficiencies or gaps stem from the inevitable dual nature of public administration as a scholarly field and also a setting for practical action. Ethics and creeds are not fundamentally scientific. Like the Hippocratic Oath, they are geared toward inculcating behaviors on which some person or group places a positive value. When we apprehend the idea of a “public service ethic” in this light, we immediately recognize its functional intent (which is not the same thing as its functional effect). So when Perry and Wise wrote that public choice and financial incentives “stand in opposition” to a public service ethic, this is explicable when thinking of a public service ethic in value terms. But what is less clear from Perry and Wise’s formulation is how this statement about values links to an account of how the world actually is, whether rendered in qualitative or quantitative terms.

If all of the precepts of public choice theory proved good descriptors of actual behavior, that would be no cause on the face of it to jettison a public service ethic—indeed, such a condition might provide even stronger justification for such an ethic. Despite Perry’s recent contention that assumptions about self-interest are problematical because they risk “becoming cast in stone in our public institutions, ensuring a self-fulfilling prophecy” (2010, p. 679), such a danger has not been conclusively demonstrated.

9. We will return to this point in the Conclusions section. The psychological literature of “moral licensing” suggests that when self-professed sinners employ morality it may curb bad behavior, but when self-professed saints do the same it may give license to bad behavior.

10. Maesschalck et al. (2008) maintained that it may be possible to determine whether the adoption of different assumptions about motivation may affect ethical behavior, but he also concluded that any such contention has not yet been verified.
After all, Madison remarked in a different context but to not dissimilar aims that if all men were angels there would be no need for government. To paraphrase him in this context, if all men were unselfish, perhaps there would be no need for a public service ethic. The point to be made here is that a public service ethic does not have to “stand in opposition” to a world in which self-interest and other factors are present, and if in the quest for a useful public service ethic we ignore or downplay recognizable aspects of human behavior as it is, then we may miss the mark on our ethical goals.

Quoting Madison again, “The essence of government is power; and power, lodged as it must in human hands, will ever be liable to abuse.” (Dorn, 1991, p. 165) As stated above, Harold Laswell (2009) went so far as to develop a schema of human institutions in terms of how they correspond to various human values, with wealth corresponding to business, the church and home to rectitude, and so forth. Under this schema the proper domain of government is power, not compassion or altruism. If this is so, what is the proper balance between stressing altruism and compassion as actual facts on the ground versus altruism and compassion as things to be valued because they do not always come naturally in an institution built for power?

Future Directions

A review of the literature suggests that key scholars favor both more rigorous empirical approaches as well as a move toward an emphasis consistent with qualitative research. Perry and Hondeghem (2009) recently called for research to proceed along several dimensions. While more rigorous explanatory
models are certainly called for on the one hand, they also called for the creation of more “holistic models” for behavior, models that more clearly allow for the fact that, in the words of LeGrand that the authors approvingly quoted, “Altruism exists alongside more self-interested motivations” (p. 23). Further, they quoted a passage by Wise from a separate paper: “If we look only for evidence to support the existence of public service motives, we cannot obtain a picture of the complexity of human behavior in a given organization” (p. 23).

It is the contention of this dissertation that the implication of Wise’s statement above is that the literature has in fact overemphasized “looking for support of the existence of the concept” and that the three authors are correct in calling for a more holistic view.

But if that is the case, from what sources should that holistic view be drawn? What should the method be for such theoretical thinking? It is also the contention of this dissertation, as will be outlined in more detail in the methodology section, that a qualitative approach, one comprising phenomenological interviews of a defined group of individuals, is a very productive way of broadening the PSM conception.

**The Literature of Sector Switching**

Less attention will be paid here to the literature of sector switching, mainly as a result of its relative paucity. This is not to say that differences between public and private sectors have been underexplored. There is a large literature on that topic (see Bellante & Link, 1981; Houston, 2009; Jurkiewicz, 1998). And the question of how businessmen are seen to adapt to public sector demands
has also been addressed, most famously by Graham Allison, who asked whether public and private management were alike “in all unimportant respects” (1986, p. 214). But in terms of sector switching specifically, very little has been written, as several scholars have noted (Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009; de Graaf & van der Wal, 2008). In some ways this is somewhat surprising and unfortunate, given the shape of the new public service, the blurring of lines between public and private, and the increased movement of individuals between sectors.

Not surprisingly, then, most of the relevant literature is of quite recent vintage. Just in the past several years, the following kinds of questions have been raised:

1) Can one observe variances by sector relative to managers’ perceptions of work life and quality? (Feeney, 2007)

2) Is sector switching a wise career move? (Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009)

3) What are the probabilities and predictive issues associated with intersector movements? (Su & Bozeman, 2009)

4) How do perceptions of the public interest differ by sector? (Feeney, 2010)

Interestingly, though, the explicit link to PSM has been underexplored. Su and Bozeman (2009b) looked at how switching affects motivation, but did not address qualitatively how sector switchers understood and were able to describe sector differences.

A qualitative approach to sector differences was accomplished in a 2008 study by de Graaf and van der Wal of value differences expressed by sector switchers in the Netherlands. The de Graaf and van der Wal study has many
similarities with the present study in that both are qualitative studies of sector switchers—in fact, the de Graaf and van der Wal paper is the only other such study of which the author is aware.

De Graaf and van der Wal interviewed sector switchers in the Netherlands with the express aim of understanding how the two groups might be seen to differ relative to the way they perceived the values environments of the different sectors in which they had worked. Their findings in general supported the notion of differences between the sectors, with the private sector values stressing profitability, competitiveness, and customer orientation and the public sector values stressing legitimacy, lawfulness, accountability, and impartiality. However, they also noted that differences between the two sectors were often less important than differences within sectors—that, for example, smaller for-profit entities could show many similarities with smaller public entities.

This dissertation differs from de Graaf and van der Wal’s study in two important ways. First, de Graaf and van der Wal asked questions about perceived values environments and did not focus on questions of motivation and attraction. Second, their interviews were only with sector switchers in the Netherlands. Since “public values can differ across cultures and nations” (Feeney, 2010, p. 3), it will be worthwhile to ask about motivational questions in an American context. While the focus of this dissertation is therefore different from De Graaf and van der Wal’s study, the methodology is quite similar, as will be described more fully in the section on methodology.
The Literature of Careers

As described above, the literature on sector switching as an activity is thin and the literature on the motivations of sector switchers thinner still. Yet there remains one active corner of the social sciences literature that can shed some light on the subject at hand, and that is the literature of career.

Career studies is of course not a discipline. Rather like PSM itself, it is less than a discipline in itself but more than a chance encounter between two disciplines. It is a way of focusing multiple lenses on one particular area of interest—in this case, the question “how do people make career decisions, and what are the changing circumstances that prompt them to make this or that decision?” Like PSM, there is a quasi-“genetic” element to the career literature. Just as some individuals under a PSM view may for some reason have a greater or lesser attraction to government work, so some individuals under a career view have a greater or lesser attraction to self-direction or other factors.

Much of the recent literature of careers—and the parts of the literature with the greatest bearing on the question at hand—deals with two separate but related concepts: the boundaryless career and the protean career. While numerous scholars have discussed the boundaryless career notion, the individuals most closely associated with the term are M.B. Arthur and D.M. Rousseau, who developed the concept in their book The Boundaryless Career: A New Employment Principle for a New Organizational Era (1996). Unlike the concept of the protean career, to which we will turn shortly, the boundaryless career is not primarily about the achievement of one’s own values through
different approaches to work. Boundaryless careers are to a great extent a functional adaptation to the emergence of different kinds of organizational needs.

According to the authors:

Within the general meaning of boundaryless careers—as being the opposite of organizational careers—lie several specific meanings, or emphases. The most prominent of these is a case where a career, like the stereotypical Silicon Valley career, moves across the boundaries of separate employers. A second meaning occurs when a career, like that of an academic or a carpenter, draws validation—and marketability—from outside the present employer. A third meaning is involved when a career, like that of a real-estate agent, is sustained by external networks or information. A fourth meaning occurs when traditional organizational career boundaries, notably those involving hierarchical reporting and advancement principles, are broken. A fifth meaning occurs when a person rejects existing career opportunities for personal or family reasons. A sixth meaning depends on the interpretation of the career actor, who may perceive a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints. A common factor in the occurrence of all these meanings is one of independence from, rather than dependence on, traditional organizational career arrangements. (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 6)

The protean career concept is somewhat different. The protean notion, while also discussed by various scholars, is most closely identified with Hall, who has developed the idea in a series of papers and books (Hall, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2004).

According to a review by Briscoe, Hall and Frautschy-DeMuth:

Individuals who hold protean career attitudes are intent upon using their own values (versus organizational values for example) to guide their career (“values-driven”) and take an independent role in managing their vocational behavior (“self-directed”). An individual who did not hold protean attitudes would be more likely to “borrow” external standards, as opposed to internally developed ones, and be more likely to seek external direction and assistance in behavioral career management as opposed to being more proactive and independent. (Briscoe et al., 2006, p. 31)

By contrast:
A person with a boundaryless career mindset "navigates the changing work landscape by enacting a career characterized by different levels of physical and psychological movement" . . . Related to the notion of psychological boundarylessness, we suggest that career actors will vary in the attitude that they hold toward initiating and pursuing work-related relationships across organizational boundaries. This does not necessarily imply physical or employment mobility. Thus a person with a decidedly high "boundaryless" attitude toward working relationships across organizational boundaries is comfortable, even enthusiastic about creating and sustaining active relationships beyond organizational boundaries (Briscoe et al., 2006, p. 31).

They conclude:

While some overlap between the two is to be expected, we view protean and boundaryless career attitudes as independent yet related constructs. That is, a person could display protean attitudes and make independent, inner-directed choices, yet not prefer crossboundary collaboration. In comparison, a person could embrace a boundaryless mindset, yet rely on one organization to develop and foster his or her career (Briscoe et al., 2006, p. 31).

Given the prominence of these conceptions, their salience to changes in work environments, and the relative lack of similar frameworks in the PSM literature, one of the goals of the interviewing undertaken in the present study was to relate experiences of sector switchers to these two ideas. Can we see evidence of boundaryless or protean behavior among those who move from sector to sector?

It is also worth noting at this point that while much has been written about factors that might give rise to boundaryless or protean behavior, little specific focus on sector has taken place. Indeed, while the private sector is seldom specifically identified in the literature as the locus where such activity is most likely to take place, such a conclusion is not that hard to make, given the nature of the discussion. Government agencies tend to be more isolated by funding,
structure, and culture from changes that may sweep through many other cultural institutions. It may also be that one might expect a lesser amount of boundaryless and protean behavior in the public sector in comparison with the private sector.

In what appears to be the only study on this point, McDonald, Brown, and Bradley asked whether traditional career paths had given way to protean ones with respect to senior managers in the Australian public sector (2005). The authors interviewed 15 such managers, going on to code the data to understand differences between traditional and protean behavior. Their conclusion was that while a trend toward protean careers was in evidence (and more visible with respect to women than men), “contrary to much existing literature which proposes that all careers have been fundamentally altered, the traditional career which relies on length of service, geographic mobility and a steady climb up the corporate ladder, is still the dominant model in some organizations” (p. 2).
Chapter Three

Methodology Part One:

Rationale for Qualitative Approach and Phenomenological Questions

The methodology section will be presented in two parts. The first part, below, discusses the general rationale for qualitative methods as well as phenomenology as an underlying approach. Chapter 4 will discuss specific methodological issues and techniques.

As discussed previously, a qualitative approach was adopted for the current study. Specifically, this study utilized phenomenologically oriented interviews (Seidman, 2006; Byrne, 2001) with a nonrandom selection of sector switchers. Before describing the methodology as it relates to the specific research question at hand, attention will be turned first to the relationship between qualitative and quantitative approaches, as this broad distinction bears on the question of what will be most useful in this particular case.

Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Much scholarly ink has been spilt over the question of the distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches, and this discussion is too often framed in terms of which is the better method. Indeed, according to William Trochim, “There has probably been more energy expended on debating the differences between and relative advantages of qualitative and quantitative
methods than almost any other methodological topic in social research" (2010, p. 3).

Faced with this seeming conflict, some have opted to try to reconcile the two approaches, maintaining that they truly comprise only one mode of research. Trochim himself argued that one cannot make a meaningful distinction because “all qualitative data can be coded quantitatively” and “all quantitative data is based on qualitative judgment” (p. 5). Others have asserted similar views (Kerlinger, 1994; D. T. Campbell, 1994).

The view expressed in this paper is that such attempts to square the circle are admirable and worthwhile in heuristic terms, but that to say that qualitative and quantitative approaches are one and the same thing under different guises seems to miss some important distinctions that remain. For one, qualitative research tends to be inductive and quantitative research tends to be deductive (Barnes et al., 2005). The fact that this is so has consequences in terms of a researcher’s general orientation to research; qualitative researchers from case study researchers to ethnographers to phenomenologists are much more likely to immerse themselves in the process of how meaning is made than are quantitative researchers. As a result, qualitative methods much more closely resemble the “normal” way individuals make meaning in their day-to-day lives: They take in information, interpret meanings, and generate new understandings.

The renewed interest in how evolution has influenced human behavior has touched many disciplines, and it is here that some of the insights from evolutionary psychology may be helpful. The processes of making meaning and
reasoning have evolutionary origins. The “normal” process of interpretation and meaning making we associate with qualitative research has clearly been adaptive from an evolutionary point of view—but how should we understand what we do when we undertake this way of understanding?

Researchers into human reasoning have noted that, try as they may to “reason,” humans are prone to systemic error, often as a result of the way our cognitive structures work (Ariely, 2008). Further, considering something as intractable as confirmation bias, Mercier and Sperber (2010) argued that reasoning itself does not do what we think it does. We see it as a means to “improve knowledge and make better decisions” when in fact, as the authors hypothesized, the evolutionary function of reason is “argumentative. . . . It is to devise and evaluate arguments intended to persuade” (p. 2).

Under this account, while qualitative and quantitative approaches may have technical similarities, qualitative research, with its more likely reliance on our “natural” way of making meaning, is prone to cognitive error. In turn, quantitative research can be seen as providing an auto-correct function to the systemic errors the mind may be prone to make when interpretation leads to possible error. But, in turn, the computational approach is limited by the meanings of the concepts measured, with the ever-present risk of “mindless empiricism”\(^1\).

Put another way, it may not be fruitful ultimately to seek to reconcile quantitative and qualitative by maintaining that they are the one and the same

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1. This is Jay D. White’s characterization of much of public administration’s dissertation research (2002, p. 574).
thing. It may be more useful to argue instead that evolution has endowed humans with both meaning-making and computational skills, and that it is how these talents are employed in any given instance—which is emphasized at what point, and how they iterate—that will determine whether new insights are held to be “true,” or even just “adaptive” in an evolutionary context.

*Narrowing the Frame of Reference*

When PSM is viewed as normatively supporting a public service ethic, the emphasis has been on conceptualizing all government as one thing to which individuals may be attracted. But in emphasizing the idea of government service as the key attractor, there has been a corresponding lack of emphasis on disaggregated views: of different tasks, irrespective of sector; of different attitudes relative to hierarchy in an organization; and of the sometimes fuzzy boundaries between public and private and between public and nonprofit.²

Accordingly, the contention here is that, if a qualitative approach is to be taken, a good deal can be gained by mining attitudes when in their unbundled, disaggregated state. PSM is closely linked to normative conceptions of how people should think about government. That is fine in normative terms, but it risks a Procrustean bed approach when we are looking at things that vary when analyzed on a disaggregated basis.

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² This is not meant to suggest that such disaggregated views have been ignored. Houston (2009) examined the question of locus (sector) versus focus (task); Lee and Olshfsky (2002) looked at the motivational aspects of task and occupation outside of an explicitly NPM framework; Steen (2008) examined differences between public and nonprofit sectors. Still, much of the literature is consciously geared toward “attraction to government” as a unitary concept as a result of the desire to link PSM and a public service ethic.
I suggest that there is something to be gained from suspending the normative justification and the all-government idea that it supports and being willing to take more modest steps at understanding voices in what may be some of their natural disaggregated states. Phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing are methodological approaches in keeping with the above discussion.

A Note on Phenomenology

The term *phenomenology* has many meanings given the number of settings in which it has been used, from its various uses in philosophy to its various uses in the sciences and social sciences. These meanings are not all the same given the different settings, but they are animated by similar attitudes and world views.

In its incarnation as formal philosophy, phenomenology is concerned with experience and the phenomena of experience—that is, the ideas, thoughts, and beliefs by which people create meanings. According to the tenets of phenomenology as philosophy, such experience is something complete in and of itself—one need not concern oneself with whether an object “really” exists outside consciousness in a concrete or ideal state. It is sufficient to understand experience as what it is.

When a rarified approach to something as abstract as philosophy becomes influential in the intellectual world, it is often adapted and incorporated into other realms. Philosophy can influence other intellectual endeavors such as the sciences or can undergird common sense views of the world (in much the
way the formal philosophy of Pragmatism, developed in America, bears some relationship to American’s tendency to see the world in pragmatic ways (Menand, 2002)). Phenomenology’s influence has been especially marked with respect to the social sciences. Phenomenology has been especially influential in areas such as psychology and sociology because such disciplines are anthropocentric and can often sit at a juncture between science (which tends toward explanation) and the humanities (which tends toward understanding).

As the influence of phenomenology was felt within the social sciences, traditions and habits developed relative to methodology and outlook that were, broadly speaking, in keeping with the underlying philosophical tenets. Relative to social research, that leads to summary statements like the following:

1) “Qualitative research examines life experiences (i.e., the lived experience) in an effort to understand and give them meaning. This usually is done by systematically collecting and analyzing narrative materials using methods that ensure credibility of both the data and the results. Phenomenology is one of many types of qualitative research that examines the lived experiences of humans” (Byrne, 2001, p. 830).

2) “A researcher applying phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the people” (Groenwald, 2004, p. 18).

3) “Qualitative research aims to understand and explain participant meaning” (Morrow & Smith, 2000, p. 200).
Relevance to PSM

How is this relevant to the research question at hand? As Bradley Wright has pointed out, PSM research has been essentially positivist, with research being “largely data driven” (2001, p. 559). In this it is not different from a great deal of public administration scholarship, which has often aspired to the kind of rigor associated with fields like economics (and economics, in turn, often aspires to the condition of the physical sciences as regards rigor).

But there’s an irony to the fact that much public administration research (certainly including PSM research) continues to strive for formal rigor just as other social sciences are looking to find ways to bring interpretation, context, and meaning back into their approaches (White, 1999) as those fields come to recognize the limitations of positivist accounts of complex human nature in light of the integration of findings in cognitive sciences and evolutionary psychology.

PSM’s continued emphasis on explanation over interpretation has a double irony. As DeHart-Davis, Marlowe, and Pandey have pointed out, feminist scholars have held that whereas much of the literature of public administration has emphasized masculine imagery, PSM is quite different in that its imagery tends toward the feminine. Yet the methods researchers have used come from the positivist tradition, one that (in masculine fashion) looks to explain and prove rather than interpret. Indeed, one of the underlying justifications for a qualitative approach to PSM is that a gendered reading of the subject matter would be entirely consistent with a methodological approach that stressed meaning and interpretation.
It is probably no accident that phenomenological approaches have been linked to feminist analysis (Fisher, 2000) and that they have had significant traction in the area of research into nursing. Relative to phenomenology and nursing research, McKibbon and Gadd have remarked that “qualitative studies have roots in women's studies, and the nursing profession has always dealt with the patient as much more of a whole person rather than basic sciences facts and numbers. Both of these factors lead to more emphasis on understanding and embracing qualitative methods for research and practice” (2004, p. 8).

In line with this thinking, Ospina and Dodge argued that public administration needs to take, and is in fact in the process of taking, a “narrative turn,” one that would, in their words, allow meaning to “catch up” to method (Ospina & Dodge, 2005, p. 147). The imagery of “catching up” that Ospina and Dodge used is compelling. It suggests, per the above discussion, that while quantitative and qualitative are not one and the same thing, they are fused in a polarity in yin/yang fashion. They are conceptually and operationally distinct, but the fact that they are fused, with their own deep moorings in the human condition, suggests that they are related nonetheless, that meaning making and computation both can illuminate, and that it is a tall order knowing which to employ at any given time. To bring this around to the question at hand, the literature review has attempted to outline some of the specifics regarding the development of the PSM concept, its aim being to suggest that it is time in this area, as in others, for meaning to catch up with methods.
None of this is to suggest qualitative is “better.” As McKibbon and Gadd (2004) pointed out with respect to a balance, “When used in combination, both quantitative and qualitative data yield a more complete analysis, and they complement each other” (p. 5). That is, using both can be in itself a kind of triangulation (or, more properly perhaps, bi-angulation).

The Phenomenological Interview

There exists a specific form of interview in line with this framework, called the phenomenological interview, an adapted form of which was used in the research.

Qualitative interviews with a phenomenological perspective have been outlined by a number of researchers (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Hycner, 1985; Boyd, 2001). A particularly valuable and much-cited guide dealing with both “how” and “why” is a book by Seidman, in which he elaborates in practical fashion on work previously undertaken by Schuman and Dolbeare (see Seidman, 2006; also Wengraf, 2001). Aspects of this book and others were relied upon to establish parameters of the interview process in terms of structure, depth, and saturation.

Bracketing, or Epoché

Epoché is the term used by Greek Skeptical philosophers to refer to a suspension of judgment, a mental trait or habit that was in keeping with their philosophical views. Given phenomenology’s emphasis on the irreducibility of experience, Husserl took the term up in the 20th century, referring to it as “bracketing,” with much the same aim: as a way of “highlight(ing) consciousness
itself” (Britannica, 2011). However, both the Greek concept of epochē and Husserl’s concept of bracketing are clearly concepts within the philosophical tradition. They are about habits of mind and thought and as such resist easy adaptation to a “how-to” list relative to scientific methodology. This is not to say that bracketing has not made the journey from philosophy to social science methodology along with other concepts from the phenomenology toolkit. It has. But it does not seem to have been the easiest journey. Philosophers are free to philosophize about the proper mental state and attitude by which to suspend presuppositions and judgments—but how does this translate in practical terms to an actual method when conducting research?

It is for this reason that when bracketing is discussed in methodological terms, there inevitably remains a heavy emphasis on intangibles such as attitude and state of mind (see, for example, Keener, 2004; Bergstrom, 2004). But there may be no quick method fix for suspending judgment, just as there is no quick way to reach Nirvana using a how-to book on meditation from the library.

That said, some techniques appear possible and advisable in addition to a watchful vigilance over one’s attitudes and possible biases. After all, it is not as though phenomenology assumes the impartiality of the observer. Quite the opposite: “Phenomenologists, in contrast to positivists, believe that the researcher cannot be detached from his/her own presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise” (Groenwald, 2004, p. 7)—all the more reason to undertake some concrete steps by which the researcher can be reminded of the dangers of interjecting one’s biases. But what steps?
Keener (2004) uses an interesting device: a statement written in advance of data collection that outlines the researcher’s own attitudes and possible biases to the extent feasible.

I have opted for this approach to bracketing, and my statement follows.
Bracketed Statement

I am writing a dissertation on sector switchers fully aware that I bring my own presuppositions and even biases to the research project. Not only do I bring biases to the research topic, but I am aware as well of how my beliefs and impulses color even the methodology I am using. I am also aware of the fact that the biases I may bring to this project may be significantly greater than those I may bring to other possible projects. This is for the very human reason that the project interests and engages me, and also because I am a prototypical sector switcher myself. My own interest in what has motivated me to work in different sectors—or just to have chosen to live the life I have lived—both animates my research and potentially biases it. In a sense, I have a personal stake in the research. I fancy that it might tell me something not only about the world, but also about me and my place in it.

Perhaps that is not the exact model of disengaged scholarship, but I do not believe I could effectively engage in an inquiry into topics in which I was disengaged. So, in a sense, the fact that I bring some biases is all right by me, since I would rather spend my time looking at something that engages than something that does not. Perhaps mathematicians or astronomers are actually disengaged and these are better models of scholarship. Not having an understanding of these areas, I concede that it is possible that such individuals are impartial and neutral. I tend to doubt that, as my sense is that most deep
motivations find their way back to some personal urge, some personal stake—another interesting insight with some direct relevance to my research topic of motivation!

One of the reasons I believe I have opted to use phenomenology as a method relates to just this point. Whether scientist X is truly neutral or not is not really germane to an understanding of who I am as a human and as a researcher. Phenomenology appeals for the same reason anthropology appealed to me as an undergraduate: because for me, understanding has always been more important than explanation.

I never quite understood Pragmatism as a philosophy until I grasped that it really, really was directly connected to the common-sense, nonphilosophical pragmatism that forms my core beliefs. Similarly, while I may have struggled with Wilhelm Dilthey’s concept of verstehen as an undergraduate, it all became a lot clearer when I simply observed my own tilt toward understanding over explanation. I have always “gotten” the point of understanding, whether coming to grips with an organizational problem to fix, sitting on an accreditation team, or thinking about a family problem. Yet running the numbers on any of those things would always leave me kind of cold. I might see the statistical relationship but would still hunger for something else in addition. I don’t feel complete without a narrative.

Of course, this is one of my largest concerns about bias. The fact that I hunger for a narrative means that I can too easily be a sucker for a good one. I tend to swoon, overly so, over fabulous rhetorical devices and articulate
argumentation. It permits me to conclude that the narrative is true because it has been persuasive. Yet as an intellectual matter, I know that humans are not necessarily built to sense truth as much as they are built to make and evaluate arguments—a point about evolution that I have made in this dissertation. What that means is that, while I will accept my desire for understanding over explanation, I must also accept that those very leanings bring their own biases.

I often remind myself of an aphorism I once penned: "Autocorrection is the bigger part of learning." What I meant by this is that since I am destined by character to seek understanding over explanation, I had not only better be good at it, but I also have to recognize that constant vigilance, evidenced by an openness to autocorrection, is essential. So I will try to bring that spirit to the material I will review.

The above deals with methods. What are my biases about the actual research topic?

For one, I very much valued my public sector experience, and though I have not returned to the public sector I would strongly consider the alternative. That may mean that I carry around a fair amount of public sector motivation with me, and while I expect I will find something similar in the interviews, I will try to orient myself to listening on that subject rather than imposing my own viewpoint.

I am also likely biased in thinking, or wanting to believe, that sector switching is a "good" thing. "Good" can have many dimensions here: useful from a societal viewpoint, not frivolous or indicative of dilettantism, character-building, a way to challenge oneself in a productive way, a way to learn new things, and
so on. Each of these aspects has a certain appeal, and in ways that relate to my self-image.

At the same time, I know there are no unalloyed things in the world. If I am honest with myself, I recognize not only these “good” things in my own career transitions but also possibly less admirable things too. I sometimes feel as though I have the proverbial Burr under my saddle and wonder why I feel so restless. Is it because I am heroically looking for a new challenge, or because I have not yet quite felt at home in my world and desire to get home by finding another? Am I better at a flash of insight than a prolonged meditation, with the consequence that each new thing that comes to bore me after the initial flash, and it is time for the long slog? Have I, despite my day job as an effective executive, secretly remained the observer/anthropologist of my undergraduate training, with the result that once I understand a given tribe I am ready to move on because just doing the work itself is not what mainly interests me?

Further, while I know my sector switching is not unique, my sense is that not many people out there have followed my path, with significant professional experiences in many different kinds of organizations: political campaigns, government, public higher education, private higher education, partner-owned professional services, and corporate private sector. My reflexive view is that most switchers will follow two main conventional paths: cashing out of mission-based work for private-sector dollars or using private sector dollars as a cushion to permit “giving back.” But it will be of interest to see whether sector switchers tend to follow these two stereotypical paths, or whether the stories are varied and
complex, perhaps more like mine.
Chapter Four

Methodology Part Two: Actions Taken

Definitions

The first task at hand was to specify what is meant by “sector switcher.” As the discussion to this point makes clear, such a specification is not obvious on its face. Under a narrow reading, the term would pertain to individuals who have moved from the public sector to the private sector or vice versa (and indeed, most articles to date adopt this definition). Yet this approach is too narrow, given the near-kin nature of the nonprofit world to the governmental world in terms of mission and, often, function.

Additionally, certain jobs in one’s career are essentially nonconsequential from the point of view of the meaning of “sector switching.” One of my respondents held a series of nominal private-sector jobs directly after graduation from college that included janitor for a company and night clerk at a bookstore, following which he entered government employment. The transition from those jobs to government ought not to be considered a switch, although the respondent was included in the sample because of later, more consequential, shifts between sectors.

In the end I crafted my definition as follows.

An individual will be deemed to have switched sectors if he or she has:
1) made a transition that was consequential in terms of his or her life and identity

2) between the private sector and

3) the public sector or the nonprofit sector,

4) in any order or sequence.

Even with this definition, additional conceptual complexities arise when one considers that the boundaries between such sectors are permeable in both fact and perception. Is a government corporation considered government or a corporation? In truth, there is a great deal of variance even within the world of government corporations relative to both fact and perception. A respondent who had worked at a semiautonomous federal corporation involved with the capital markets considered it to be more corporate and more preoccupied with money than private entities at which he had worked, and in fact such federal agencies are more likely than municipal entities to give off a corporate air. And the executive director of a state public authority asserts that she is in no way part of state government, despite the fact that the authority, like most, maintains close organizational, political, and accountability ties to general government.

On the other hand, some private entities give off a countervailing “public” air. For example, several of the respondents had worked at for-profit think tanks where the attitudes, culture, work product, and employee backgrounds were quite public in character.

The decision I made was to hold to the definition above, but to create five provisional “buckets” into which I could place different employment experiences,
if only to understand the differences in accounts I was hearing in light of the nature of the different buckets:

*Public*

1. General government

2. Public authorities, public corporations, public higher education

*Nonprofit*

3. Private nonprofit entities (501(c)(3) charitable organizations)

*For-profit*

4. For-profit entities with a clear public dimension (outsourcing of government function, governmentally oriented think tank, professional services firm with a clear public side) and public or non-profit entities that are not charitable or governmental in nature (trade association, unions)

5. Private sector, including self-employment, corporations, small business, partnerships, professional services (law firms, accounting firms, and so on)

I found the distinctions I made within each of the major categories to be helpful in understanding the fuzzy boundaries. Nonetheless, all activity fell into one of the three main categories for purposes of actual classification—that is, all positions were held to be in the private, public, or nonprofit areas, irrespective of the fuzzy boundaries of #2 and #4 above.
Nature of Sample

Given the nature of the research and the qualitative approach taken, a random sample was considered neither useful nor necessary. Rather, a nonrandom sample was constructed in two stages. In the first stage, I directly contacted individuals I knew from my own background or was able to identify on my own. I then used “snowballing,” asking each respondent in turn whether they could identify others who met the definition. “Snowballing is a method of expanding the sample by asking one informant or participant to recommend others for interviewing” (Groenwald, 2004, p. 9)

My own background has been as a mid-level to senior manager. Further, my government background has been significantly more in state and local government than the federal government. Accordingly, my initial respondents tended also to meet this profile, as did later respondents, given the natural effect of “snowballing.”

I was generally quite comfortable with this result. For one, when most people think about sector switching, they tend to think of the federal government and of the special revolving-door situations that arise out of the various iron triangles found in the federal government. And in books such as Mackenzie’s The In-and-Outers (1987), the notion of transient senior appointments had already come under some scrutiny. It was more interesting to me, and I felt it would be more productive in terms of a study, to examine sector switching in areas where it had been analyzed somewhat less, in state and local contexts.
Of course, this compromise on method brings with it certain limitations. Respondents were predominantly drawn from state and local government, limiting the ability to generalize to all government. Respondents were geographically skewed toward the Northeast, with most respondents’ professional backgrounds centered in New England, New York, or New Jersey. Given my higher education background, higher education was disproportionally represented in terms of nonprofits and public (state) higher education. And respondents were generally mid-to-high level managers or executives.

The latter fact is, I believe, a good thing—a study of senior sector switchers has real usefulness. Further, at lower levels of employment (custodial, to take an example), differences between sectors in terms of culture and work conditions may be less relevant than at higher levels. Still, it is to be noted that this study focuses on higher-ranking officials and managers.

I was fortunate in my mining of contacts that I received no turn-downs. Each person I was able to ask directly agreed to an interview. So while the sample makes no claims to randomness, it is also the case that no self-selection issues could be present, since all who were asked to participate said yes.

That said, I did make some choices of my own in terms of whom to ask for an interview. That is, I received somewhat more recommendations for people to interview than I ultimately chose to ask. Here, my decision was based on a desire not to have the sample tilt too much in one direction or another. For example, as it happened, several of the attorneys whom I asked for an initial interview were more diligent than others in snowballing new names. I chose not
to follow up on a number of these on the grounds that I did not want a sample
that was overly attorney-heavy due to the vagaries of the snowballing process. I
did the same with some individuals with state higher education experience, or
with too much nonprofit experience without any public-sector experience.

Further, I often asked interviewees in the "snowballing" process to come
up with names of more junior and younger individuals, on the grounds that my
nonrandom sample, reflecting my background since the sample snowballed from
my own contacts, might benefit from the inclusion of less senior and younger
voices. Some of those voices are here, though I did not receive many
nominations. This may reflect the fact that sector switching both takes time to do
in one’s career and may be correlated with more senior status.

In all cases of autocorrecting the "snowballing" process, however, I was
animated by a desire to equalize the vagaries of snowballing, not alter the
sample for other reasons.

A Profile of the Respondents as a Group

The interviewed group consisted of 50 individuals. This number was
selected for several main reasons. First, as a practical matter, handling the
voluminous amount of data from somewhat lengthy interviews is a challenge, and
a trade-off exists at some point between the potential benefits of “more” and the
potential problems of interpretation. But a more salient argument for 50 is that de
Graaf and van der Wal (2008), whose work parallels this effort most closely,
found that a number in this range (they used 60) to be a useful number in terms
of theoretical saturation. And in fact, while theoretical saturation is not a situation
that can be proven in a statistical sense, my own experience with the data from
the 50 interviews conducted suggested strongly to me that saturation had been
reached.

Relative to gender, the group consisted of 38 males and 12 females.
Relative to race, the group consisted of 49 Caucasians and one African
American. The average age of the group was in the low- to mid-fifties. The bulk
of respondents were in their late forties through mid-fifties, with some as young
as their late thirties and some as old as their mid-sixties.

One striking aspect of the collective experience of the group was the
relatively high number of different positions held, irrespective of sector. The
mean number of positions per person was approximately 7. Given an average
age of 53, the average respondent could be expected to have been active
professionally for perhaps 25 to 30 years. Holding an average of 7 jobs over that
period of time means that the average tenure in each job for all respondents
would range roughly between 3.5 and 4.25 years.

Obviously, the number of positional changes will be greater than the
number of transitions between sectors. Even here, though, we find that one
transition in a career (say, from the private to the public or the public to the
private) is the exception rather than the rule. Only 19 careers, or 38% of the
total, reflected one significant transition. Three or four transitions between
sectors was very common. The mean number of transitions per career was 2.3,
with the highest number reflecting seven separate sectoral transitions.
Is there anything that can be said about the nature of the voyages taken in terms of direction? Here, a number of issues bear noting.

First is the fact that it was relatively rare for individuals to begin their career in a nonprofit setting. Perhaps that results from the relatively smaller size of the nonprofit sector at the time that most of these careers began some 25 to 30 years ago. Whatever the cause, it is interesting that only 3 individuals in this sample (6%) began their careers in a nonprofit setting. By contrast, 16 of the respondents (32%) are currently in a nonprofit setting and 26 (51%) worked in the nonprofit sector at some point in their careers.

That said, the public/private distinction remains the key polarity. The public and private sectors together are present in all but eight cases, with these including private and nonprofit sectors, with no public aspect.

The full career paths of all respondents are portrayed visually in Exhibit A, “Career Paths of Interviewees.”

**Interview Questions**

The phenomenological approach associated by Seidman, based in part by work by Schuman and Dolbeare, segments the interview process into parts (Seidman, 2006; Wengraf, 2001). The first part consists of a life history. The second reconstructs the “details of experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 12). The third is reflective and calls upon respondents to make sense of their account.

It is important to allow interviewees space to allow for biography because narrative is important (White, 2002). But the interviews are not being held in a
theoretical vacuum—the research into what PSM comprises suggests directions to be set by the interviewer.

Accordingly, I utilized a semi-structured set of questions as follows.

**Part One: General Questions on Life History**

1) What is your current job and how long have you had it?

2) Could you please describe for me your career path, including your transitions between sectors?

**Part Two: The Details of Experience Taking Account of Motivational Questions**

3) Can you go into more detail regarding each of your choices to switch employment sectors? What were the circumstances surrounding your choice?

**Part Three: Reflective Questions**

4) As you look back, can you provide any overall reflections on what motivated you to move from sector to sector, and how that motivation was fulfilled or not fulfilled in your employment situations?

5) Is there anything you’d like to add on any of the topics we’ve discussed?

Given the fairly elite nature of many of my interviewees, I did not opt for three separate interviews but rather structured my questions to generally follow this approach over the course of one interview, which could take up to an hour but generally ran closer to 45 minutes. Of the 50 interviews, 34 were able to be done in person; 16 were conducted telephonically for reasons of convenience of
schedule. Also, given the nature of the interviewees and the perceived need on my part for rapport, I did not limit my comments to the above questions but engaged in back-and-forth over the questions, adding clarity as needed. But the overall shape of the interviews followed the structure above: life history, details, and reflections.

Interviewees signed consent agreements, the form of which is included as Appendix A. The interviews were transcribed, and both the digital recordings and transcripts were loaded into NVivo.

Analysis

Hycner (1985) recommends listening to the interviews repeatedly to gain a sense of their “gestalt,” and this process was followed. He then suggests five steps for evaluation:

1) Bracketing and phenomenological reduction.
2) Delineating units of meaning.
3) Clustering of units of meaning to form themes.
4) Summarizing each interview.
5) Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews.

Bracketing was accomplished via an immersion into the participants’ meanings and reflections on my own possible biases. Units of meaning for analysis purposes were developed and meanings were clustered into themes, as will be described in later sections. Each interview was summarized, and each summary is included in the section to follow. As many general and unique
themes from all the interviews were then extracted in order to arrive at tentative conclusions.

The NVivo software program was then employed to assist in coding the data and in thematic development. Since the methodology employed in this exploratory work is phenomenology and not grounded theory, the work on NVivo was not undertaken actually to devise a grounded theory. Still, the coding process is an important one for the distillation and organization of disparate narratives, and NVivo was a helpful tool in this respect.
Chapter Five

The Narratives

A phenomenological approach entails listening to what people actually say. The transcripts of the interviews are obviously too voluminous to include here as data, but respect for the data suggests the importance of providing summaries of each story.

In constructing these stories, I have endeavored to “bracket” as a mental exercise to the extent possible. Much in the stories is simply factual, but there are a number of places where interpretation enters. But note that relative to these stories, I have endeavored to summarize interpretations provided by the interviewees. That is, the interpretations included in the narratives are, to the extent possible through the employment of bracketing, how the interviewees see their history. My interpretations will follow in the Results section.

While the texts of the narratives aim to provide the authentic voices of interviewees, I will begin my interpretive process by clustering interviews around various themes that are found in them. The clusters I have chosen are as follows:

- High Public Sector Motivation
- Low Public Sector Motivation
- Individuals Who Are “Called”
- Professionals
Protean Characters
Careerists
Giving Back After a Career
Finding Oneself
Fence Sitters

As with any such categorization, the distinctions made are to some extent subjective, and they are not mutually exclusive. For instance, careerists and professionals can overlap. I have placed individuals into one or the other category on the basis of what appeared to be a dominant motif of their stories. The above breakout can serve as a useful way of organizing the stories into groupings that cohere around a central idea, and are therefore mostly a heuristic device to facilitate a useful review of a significant number of stories.

Further, the organization into such categories is not intended to force the stories into a predetermined mold. Per the above, I have tried to keep the integrity of each story intact from the point of view of each teller.

High Public Sector Motivation

As has been previously discussed, PSM is connected to overarching issues of altruism, “giving back,” and non-self-regarding behavior, but it is connected in a very specific way: with reference to public service and government work. As these interviews will make clear, there are many ways to express a desire to “give back” without any particular thought being given to government in the process. Yet a specific governmental emphasis was in evidence in some interviews.
These, however, were a distinct minority. Of the 50 interviews undertaken, 9 can be clearly characterized in this fashion. Further, of these 8, only 4 (including the first 4 below) articulate a commitment to public service in a relatively unalloyed fashion, encompassing not only public service as an abstract concept but also placing a positive value on government work. The remaining 5 value public service but question aspects of it, with 4 of these 5 going so far as to express significant reservations or even highly negative feelings about government work and government workers.

*High Attachment to Public Service, Including Partiality toward Government (Four Interviews)*

*Jerome.*

Jerome is a senior official at one of the large federal semiautonomous financial corporations, with responsibilities for sorting out credit portfolio issues in the aftermath of the meltdown in the mortgage market.

Jerome grew up with an appreciation for the value of public service. His parents held positions in academia and journalism and wrote on public issues. He was interested and active in politics through college and law school, so much so that his reform-oriented political activity caused him to drop out of law school for a time. During this period he also joined Vista.

The tumult of 1968, including the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, devastated him for a time, and he “crashed” after these events. He returned to politics by working on a United States Senate campaign and eventually returned to law school as well.
A series of progressively more responsible positions in government followed: a position in the New York City budget office prior to the fiscal crisis, a special assistantship to a federal cabinet secretary, a staff position in the United States Senate assigned to the Appropriations and Judiciary Committees, and a series of senior positions back in the New York budget office as well as in the entities created to help fix the New York City fiscal crisis. His last public-sector position prior to a shift to the private sector was as the executive director of a municipally sponsored public authority.

At around this time, while Jerome still felt the pull of public service, he wondered how much further he could go without becoming an elected official himself or in some other way becoming more directly immersed in politics. Having seen the practice of politics as a trade in a large city, his reform orientation caused him to have reservations about going down the road any further, and he opted, at age 40, to “cash in the chits and make some money.”

He held two positions in the financial services sector, both related to municipal finance. The tumult occasioned by the 1987 stock market disruption left him looking for work, and he returned, briefly and somewhat unhappily, to the public sector, where his employment at a municipal economic development corporation was cut short. In Jerome’s mind, the departure was brought about by a clash between his reform/good government instincts and the way things were done, which was anything but that.

He returned to the private sector, where he developed a specialty in the field of banking, analyzing institutional credit risk and recommending measures to
retain solvency. He had performed this work for over 20 years when he was asked to join the staff of the federal corporation where he now works. He found it "most satisfying" to be able to use the skills developed in the private sector in a return to the public sector.

He remains very partial to the public sector and "even more" so to public mission. He thinks the individuals he worked with in the public sector to be "well motivated" and "as smart as a whip . . . a really smart bunch of people." By contrast, he found individuals in the private sector to be "a mile wide and an inch deep." That said, he cautioned that he didn't want to go too far in his professed love for the public sector, and that while his return to the public sector was welcome, for the most part it provided an "extra kick" of the psychic variety, because the actual work of the federal corporation was not that different from work in the private sector.

Summary of Jerome

Number of positions: 13

Number of transitions: 4

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu/pr/pu

Paul.

Paul is self-employed, managing a number of small, independent ventures. Paul graduated from college in public relations but did not immediately enter that field. Instead, he chose to become a public school teacher, a position he took to avoid the draft. He found the job "repetitive" and opted to leave after 5 years, when he no longer needed the occupational deferment.
He returned to college for an advanced degree in urban planning and from there moved through a series of communications and public relations positions in state government, initially in the area of housing and urban planning but eventually in other areas of the government as well. He had long had an interest in public policy, and these positions appealed to him greatly. He found the press office of a major state agency to be “a very exciting place. We were doing great things for the public, I thought, and still do . . . it got to be a very intellectually stimulating environment that just by responding to reporters’ questions you made policy.”

A turnover in administrations caused Paul to leave his final government position. While he would have preferred to stay in government, he was not able to find a suitable position, and his next job involved doing similar things for a utility company.

For Paul, the utility:

. . . was pretty much of a shock to me. Even though they serve the public with utility and gas it was a very ‘me first’ kind of attitude that was, that I did not see so much in the public sector. It was a system built on bonuses and the conversation often was about how much you’re getting in your pension and what about your bonus and what about your golf outing, where those kinds of issues were never, never an issue in the public sector. And it was a very . . . the motivation for people there seemed to be very, very different. . . I like the public-sector motivation. It’s just a different, a different thing.

Paul eventually left the utility for the varied self-employment he now practices and has not returned to government work.

Summary of Paul

Number of positions: 5
Sonja.

Sonja is Executive Director of Business Administration for a unit of a large state university that handles sponsored research and related areas.

After graduating from college with a political science major, Sonja first worked for about 10 years in a series of positions in the hotel and hospitality area, mostly in training. She was successful in these jobs but found aspects of the industry not to her liking and decided to return to college for an advanced degree. She received her degree in public administration.

The university at which she received her public administration degree is located in a large urban center. An internship in the city assessor’s department led to a full-time position for city government working for the city business administrator. She liked this job a great deal because she found she “could actually affect public policy.” From there she worked for three separate semi-autonomous development corporations connected to city government and involved with urban development.

She then met someone associated with the business function at the state university at which she had received her degree. She took a job on the business side at this university and has been there since, through a series of increasingly responsible positions.

She values her work at the state university but values her prior municipal work even more. She reflects back on her time in city government:
I think I really enjoyed my work in the city . . . Most people would say that’s insane. But here I was in an urban environment, the largest city in the state, having sort of a direct impact on policy, and being able to influence the public policy. Of course, my power is a derivative from the business administrator, but I was basically his right-hand person. And it was varied in dealing with different departments, so I got a broad-based experience in municipal government. Here, I do the same thing on a much smaller [scale] . . . I’m not getting the same satisfaction, I don’t think, out of my work as I was then.

Summary of Sonja

Number of positions: 5

Number of transitions: 1

Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/

Brian.

Brian works as an attorney in a public agency, working mainly on business and real estate matters.

Brian’s undergraduate focus was on environmental affairs and early on thought he would gravitate to a position dealing with the environment in terms of either its scientific or public policy dimensions. Near the end of his studies, he also became interested in the legal aspects of environmental issues.

On leaving college, Brian first worked for a federal environmental agency. “It was a great career, and I could have stayed there my whole life, but for some reason I had the law thing in my mind.” But instead of going to law school, he left the EPA and, with his girlfriend, bicycled across the country during the summer, landing in the Pacific Northwest. There he worked for a different federal environmental agency, when once again he felt called by the idea of the law.
Now, to an interest in the environment Brian added an interest in redevelopment law, spurred by much of what he had seen on the West Coast.

He went to law school and began to focus more clearly on redevelopment. On receiving his degree, he went to work for a large regional law firm with an active practice in the areas of real estate and redevelopment. He stayed in the practice of law at the firm for a number of years but ultimately opted to return to government employment because he desired a direct connection with the public sector. He is very satisfied with the move, even with a cut in compensation.

Summary of Brian

Number of positions: 4

Number of transitions: 2

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu

High Attachment to Public Service; Mixed Views on Government (One Interview)

Gray.

Gray manages a unit specializing in housing finance at a large Wall Street firm.

Gray’s interest in housing and housing policy extends back to his first position after graduating from college, providing technical assistance on sweat-equity renovation projects for HUD in New York City. From this position, Gray worked briefly at HUD in Washington, then returning to New York City, where he held a number of positions in city government in the economic development area.

Gray’s exposure to financing issues during this period created an interest in the financing process. He was recruited to join a Wall Street firm in investment
banking, and over the last 30 years has held a number of increasingly responsible positions at a variety of such firms.

Hard as it may be to believe in this era of inflated Wall Street compensation, when Gray moved from city government to investment banking it was a lateral move financially, at least as far as base compensation was concerned. There was always the prospect of bonuses over time in the future, but they did not loom large in Gray’s mind, nor did he receive significant bonuses for a few years.

In making the move, Gray still had at least one eye on government. He came to New York City government in the immediate aftermath of the fiscal crisis, and the example of Felix Rohatyn was on his mind—the model of the investment banker who becomes the indispensable public servant, using private-sector finance skills to salvage a government that had lost its way through too much politics.

Investment banking had appeal in other ways, too, beyond the money. For one, it could be a way of ducking the bureaucracy and getting to the top—to a commissioner slot, for instance—without the long slog through the trenches.

I was impatient with government, and I was uncertain about my long-term career in terms of having a marketable skill. So going to Wall Street I could get that and then I could leapfrog over everybody and come back as a commissioner.

Then there was possibly a subtle class element. Gray was not from a privileged background (“I never even had vacations when I was growing up”), and wanted to be able to show Wall Street he was up to their demands.
And I kid you not—I had an interview with [investment banking firm X], and they actually asked me what my parents did, what their careers were. They were trying to figure out if I had any Wall Street stock, if you will. And then I had a number of people say, “We work harder on Wall Street than in government. We work on the weekends. We work late.” And I’m like, “Yeah, that’s what I do in government.”

That competitiveness served Gray well over his investment banking career, which has been successful. Later in life, Gray has a somewhat different point of view:

A long time ago, someone in the business told me this [investment banking] would be a great business if it weren’t for the clients. And I like a lot of aspects of the business, but at this point of my life, at 56 years old, I’m tired of being held hostage to what my clients think of me relative to my competitors and having to wake up every morning and worry about did I have the right breakfast ingredients for [the finance staff from] New York City when they came to our offices for a meeting. You can get into some pretty silly stuff. I’m sure you have many examples of that, where you look at yourself and go, “This is what I went to graduate school for? This is what I trained my entire career for? To put up with this nonsense?” And when you’re in your thirties and even your forties you’re wrapped up in the competitiveness of it and the success aspect of it and you don’t think about a whole lot, but I think about it more these days as to whether I couldn’t be doing something more productive.

Gray was sounded out for several high-level jobs in the federal administration at the beginning of the Obama administration, and the idea appealed to him. The firm at which he’d been working had just gone under in the wake of the 2008 downturn, and his next position in Wall Street was not yet solidified. Unfortunately, the positions he was being considered for required Senate confirmation, and he was required to disclose to his vетters that he had employed an undocumented alien as a nanny. The idea was immediately dropped and his return to government shelved.
Today, Gray is poised to find a way back to a mission-based position, which could be with government, although Gray’s thinking is more along nonprofit lines. He is not as interested in the abstract idea of “giving back” as he would be in finding some way to take action on specific things of concern to him, like teaching schoolchildren about financial literacy.

Summary of Gray

Number of positions: 7

Number of transitions: 1

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr

*High Attachment to Public Service; Negative Views about Government (Four Interviews)*

*Carla.*

Carla is Chief Executive Officer of a state public authority involved with financing economic development.

Carla grew up in a family that was strongly oriented to the problems small businesses faced. Additionally, she grew up in a city where urban renewal was demolishing whole neighborhoods, including the tight-knit neighborhood where she grew up. Both experiences were influential in her decision to get her degree in urban studies. As she put it, “The theme of urban development was always with me.”

Her first position was for a citywide development corporation. She soon realized that success in such an environment would require additional skills, and so she returned to school for an MBA. When in business school she detoured to
work for a for-profit financial advisory firm, one that provided fee-based financial advice to units of government. The idea came to her of moving to a private-sector position working on public-sector financial issues.

This was the era in which it seemed that from the perspective of a recent graduate all roads led to Wall Street, and Carla went so far as to interview for, and receive an offer from, a major Wall Street firm doing public finance. But after all the interviews she “decided it just sounded horrible.” She continued:

I went through a set of interviews with one investment banking firm, and it was a long day and it was the seventh interview of the day, and it was a young guy, right out of business school himself. “Why do you want to work at this firm?” And I gave my whole reason why I want to work there. Work on interesting financing projects. Again: “Why do you want to work here?” And again, the second time, “I want to use my finance expertise to help...” And then he said: “Do you want to make money?” And I said, “That’s not the main thing. I want to be well compensated, but I’m not going to go to work every day thinking about how much money I make. I gotta be happy. And I gotta work with people who motivate me, or who I’m motivated by to do a good job.” And so I think what really motivates me is the ability to make a difference in our state, with people.”

She went instead to one of the largest public authorities in the Northeast, a “dynamic organization that did a lot of great things.” Her state government experience continued with a stint on the staff of the state treasurer, overseeing the bond and financial programs of the state. From there she eventually moved to the executive director position at the public authority where she is currently employed.

While acknowledging that the public authority at which she works is a “state entity,” she rejects the notion that it can be considered state government. “We’re not part of the state,” she asserts. “We are not state employees.” In fact, she has a relatively negative view of government proper.
I could never . . . personally be motivated to run a state department. I’ve been asked over the years to be a commissioner of state agencies. And the inability to control your destiny as a leader, and to make decisions in terms of staffing, in terms of motivation, in terms of, I mean, I think part of the problem of the whole civil service system, for example, to me is it’s limiting . . . there are a lot of limiting factors on how to do things in a state system . . . I feel like this is the ultimate dream job for me in that we run like a profit business, but we have a public policy mission. That motivates me.

Summary of Carla

Number of positions: 4

Number of transitions: 2

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu

Edmund.

Edmund is an elected state representative and is also partner at a large law firm.

After graduating from college and law school, Edmund took up the practice of law but also became active in community based organizations in the urban neighborhood where he lived. That led to a series of elected positions in the state party apparatus, leading eventually to the position of chairman of one of the two main political parties in the state. He became closely involved in a number of statewide political campaigns as both campaign advisor and legal advisor. He then ran for and won an elected office at the municipal level, in the town to which he had moved.

His legal reputation and political background brought him to a series of positions in the judiciary culminating in appointment as an appellate judge, a lifetime appointment.
He stepped down from the bench to become chief counsel to the then governor, a move which caused him to lose his lifetime appointment. When the governor left office, he could not return to the bench but instead focused on building a practice as a partner with a national law firm based in another city looking to build business in Edmund’s home state. He was successful in building this practice, but he had no real desire simply to engage in the successful practice of law. He then opted to, in effect, start over at the beginning, running for the relatively lowly position of state representative. He won the election and now holds that position while still a partner at his firm.

I’m basically working two jobs and an 80-hour week. So it’s a lot of work. I’m working my rear end off, and it’s worth it. I wish I could do 80 hours a week just in the public sector, but I can’t afford that. I’ve got bills to pay and tuition to pay and things like that.

Despite Edmund’s strong commitment to the public sector, he holds government itself in relatively low esteem. Comparing his judgeship, an appointment for life that he gave up, with positions held by most public employees, Edmund remarked:

I had been a judge, an appointment for life. But as a practical matter, all public employees have appointments for life, with the exception of those high-level employees that come and go as administrations come and go because, particularly those that have union protection, they can only be removed for cause. I have found that one of the great things that’s lacking in public sector management is management. There’s not that kind of countervailing pushback against bad employees, and as a consequence the unions have undue sway . . . the primary criterion for making more money in the public sector in [this state] is breathing. If you breathe longer than the next guy, you get paid more money.

Edmund is a strong believer in paying for performance, and for structuring financial rewards to incent people to work in teams. A key reason for his return
to the public sector as a state representative is to move some of his ideas forward for government reform in the legislative arena.

Summary of Edmund

Number of positions: 6
Number of transitions: 3
Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/pr/pu

Bruce.

Bruce manages his own real estate company.

From childhood Bruce was interested in government and politics.

It was something I’d always been interested in, being a legislator. I got chosen to be state rep for a day when I was in high school, and it was an inspiring experience, and that’s what made me get into it in the first place. When I graduated from college the seat had opened up and I ran for it.

He was one of the youngest state representatives in the nation at that time. But while he “really liked public service,” he “couldn’t stay with the salary thing being what it was” at that time, and so opted to supplement his income by becoming a real estate agent. “Initially,” he says, “it was a way for me to stay in the public service.” Somewhat later, he was able to purchase the firm, which he now owns.

Once he started with real estate, though, he found that he “really liked it.” He also found himself “pulled in both directions,” with both his political career and his business doing well.

The tension came to a head for him when he was invited onto the ticket to run for statewide office as lieutenant governor. He lost that race, left his position as state representative, and now is working full-time on his real estate business.
Reflecting back, Bruce commented:

Growing my own business has probably been the best thing that I ever did, because you can see both worlds very clearly and, being CEO of your own business, you’re like a ship in the water. You can navigate wherever you want to go. You make decisions every day that you sink or swim by, and when you want to do something you do it. On the other hand, being in public service, it’s totally different. A lot of times on the law-making end it’s very frustrating, because even if you’ve got the best idea in the world it usually takes years to get it implemented. I would imagine if you’re an administrator no one wants to take responsibility for anything anywhere in the government. There’s a bureaucratic mindset wherever you are in public service that innovation and risk taking and all the things that make you successful in the private sector are things that get you fired instantly in public service.

Bruce might consider working in government at some point, but is concerned about the bureaucratic mindset and thinks that anyone taking a job as commissioner of an agency should be someone who “ran a successful business.” On the other hand, his affection for public service in the abstract is unabated, and he definitely contemplates running for office again at some point in the future.

Summary of Bruce

Number of positions: 3
Number of transitions: 1
Sequence of transitions: pu/pr

Greta.

Greta is a partner and chief operating officer at an investment management firm specializing in creating municipal bond portfolios for high-net-worth individuals.

Greta’s initial involvement with the public sector took place in college, where she served as an intern in the office of her congressman. She liked the
work immensely, and even took a year off to work in the office full-time before returning to complete her degree.

On graduation, she returned to Washington, where she found employment in the office of one of the two main political parties on the White House liaison staff. She found this work to be a “blast.”

After several years, she was asked to return to Capitol Hill to join the Appropriations Committee staff, where her former congressman and employer was then a senior member. She loved this job as well, putting in “18- to 20-hour days” for 5 years. She then says she found herself “totally burnt out.”

She returned to her home state without much direction and unsure of what to do next. She started doing temp work in offices just to bring in some income. One of those temp jobs was in the public finance department of an investment bank, where she was eventually brought along into the investment banking business. She stayed at this investment bank for a decade, moving from public finance to the fixed income desk at the firm’s New York office, where she worked closely with the head of the firm on managing aspects of the firm’s fixed income work.

She intended to stay at the firm, but the 9/11 attack changed her plans. Her apartment in Battery Park City was effectively shut down in the wake of the attack, and she decided it was time to leave New York.

Once again, she returned to her home state unsure what to do next. She decided to volunteer to work in the then-current gubernatorial campaign, where she got to know the individual who was to win and to on to become governor.
She became his chief of staff for legislative affairs and went on later in the administration to a position as a cabinet secretary managing a department of state government.

While she once again loved her jobs, “4 years was enough of that” and she once again felt burnt out. Wondering what to do next, she considered a senior federal appointment but ruled it out on the grounds that it would likely last only another year with a presidential election looming. She opted instead to work on a small team starting up an investment management venture, the firm she works at today.

Despite her several shifts from the public to the private sector, Greta speaks with great passion about public service. Moreover, her focus on giving back is very specifically about the public service and does not extend to other good deeds.

She has “no interest in nonprofits—none.” She can identify a number of causes that she thinks ought to motivate her in the direction of nonprofit involvement. “I wish I had it in me,” she says. But she just can’t find the motivation.

Greta noted that it’s not about helping as much as it is about a more abstract sense of duty. She said that while she could never work for a nonprofit, she could easily have seen herself joining the military as a career earlier in life.

For Greta, as with Edmund and Bruce, a strong sense of public service does not extend to partiality for government work or government workers. According to Greta, “You can’t really like government to be effective in it.”
Summary of Greta

Number of positions: 7
Number of transitions: 3
Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu/pr

Low Public Sector Motivation

Others interviewed evinced little to no public sector motivation (or in some cases even any sort of “giving back” motivation), even though they worked in public or nonprofit positions.

Chuck.

Chuck is a town manager.

Chuck grew up in the South and attended college via ROTC. On graduation, he entered the armed services and considered making this a career. He valued the management lessons he was learning in the military and, along with his new wife, enjoyed the social aspects.

He opted to not pursue a military career but had no grand plan. He says he never felt “called” to do one thing or another, that “things just happened,” and that a lot depended on “which job [came] my way.”

He secured a position in telephony and technology, a good choice for advancement because the field was just then emerging. Over 32 years he held a series of increasingly responsible positions at several large and small firms in telephony, some regulated and some unregulated, living in nine states as he built his career.
When his last private sector employer was bought out, Chuck found himself out of work and wondering what to do next. He and his wife first opted to take a year and a half off, buying a large tract of land and renovating an old house. When it came time to think about full-time employment once again, his first instinct was to return to the same area of the private sector in which he had built his career, but he increasingly came to think he’d like to try something different.

He did not seek a position as town manager and had no specific thought to enter government. It more or less came to him as an opportunity. He took the opportunity and is very happy with his job. Chuck is positive about his experience as a town manager but did not express any sense of its importance in public service terms. Rather, he sees it as a venue in which to continue practicing good management.

Management is management. If you’re a good manager you can function at a high level in virtually anything you do, in the public sector as well as the private sector. Government administration is a regulated service business, and if you take care of your taxpayers and constituents just as you take care of your customers, in the end things will work out. So operational management skills transcend the boundaries of the sector, and at the end of the day you’re managing people, process, and technology.

Summary of Chuck

Number of positions: 5

Number of transitions: 1

Sequence of transitions: pr/pu

Sidney.

Sidney is a county administrator.
When Sidney left college he started a house-painting company with a friend and ran the business for several years. His father was a physician, and having had an interest in medicine growing up Sidney decided to work at a local hospital, performing various laboratory and technical functions while he studied to secure a nursing home administrator license. While he was employed at the hospital and studying, he also started up an institutional cleaning company, which he managed on the side. He eventually left the hospital to manage the firm full-time.

He returned to the medical arena when he took a position as a nursing home administrator. Following some time in the position, he once again returned to small business, where he created two new companies.

Having also had an interest in law, Sidney paused at this moment, some 15 years into his career, to attend law school. He took 4 years off to complete his degree. His plan was to practice law for no more than 5 years, in order to better understand its actual workings, and then to look for another "adventure." He began considering a new position, but was not looking to join the public sector specifically.

“As it happened,” Sidney related, the county in which he located had recently consolidated various functions and had created a new position of county administrator. Since counties are closely involved with two areas of his interest (health care and law) he found the job appealing and took the offer when it was made.
He has been in the job for 15 years. He has enjoyed it a great deal but is now looking for another "adventure" and is doing so in the same spirit that brought him to his current job—that is, it could be in the public sector or it could be anywhere else. According to Sidney, "I did not make a decision to go to the public sector. I made a decision to look for opportunities . . . I clearly did not make any sort of reasoned decision that said, 'Gee, I really need to serve the people.'"

Sidney, like Chuck, perceives no significant break in his transition to the public sector.

All through this, whether I was doing a pig roast at an airport, running a cleaning crew, practicing law, or doing government stuff, I am applying the same skill set. I am working with people on customer service, I am facilitating, I am mediating, I am educating, I am advocating . . . There's a lot of things to do in life, and the last thing I want to do is do one thing from beginning to end . . . [People might say to me], "Wow, you've done a lot of different things." I don't honestly see it that way. I see that I have taken who I am as a person and I have made myself comfortable in virtually any situation.

Sidney is considering moving on from his current position. He is doing so in the same spirit that brought him to his current job: one of looking for a "new adventure." It may or may not be in the public sector.

Summary of Sidney

Number of positions: 10

Number of transitions: 5

Sequence of transitions: pr/nfp/pr/nfp/pr/pu
Blanche.

Blanche is vice president for customer services of a firm providing medical equipment to hospitals nationwide.

Blanche has spent most of her career in health care purchasing and materials management, moving back and forth between positions working for nonprofits, where she was in charge of purchasing, and for-profits, where she provided materials management services to nonprofits. Additionally, she worked for a for-profit subsidiary of a large nonprofit association of hospitals.

In making these moves, she was very aware that she was shifting sectors. The main factors on her mind when contemplating a move were career-based:

Some of it had to do with, well, how much more information about the industry am I going to learn? How many more people will I be able to network with? Like, how is it going to enhance what I already know? Because there are other opportunities that are there that I just—you know, dismissed, no, no, no, because if it was like a lateral move and I really had nothing to gain and I'd be doing this same exact thing or something extremely similar, what's the point? Just stay where you are? Like, why start over to do the same thing? So each job I moved to allowed me to learn something new and acquire a new skill and meet new people and continually develop my ability to network and know more people in the industry.

The prestige factor also counts:

[I was] given the opportunity to work in an extremely large organization in New York City. So to have [prominent hospital X] on your resume in and of itself was worth something.

Summary of Blanche

Number of positions: 9

Number of transitions: 4

Sequence of transitions: nfp/pr/nfp/pr
Derek.

Derek is a sole-proprietor independent management consultant.

Derek, an African American, grew up in the South in a family attuned to the civil rights issues of the day. Derek’s focus in school and professionally, however, was business.

Right out of college he worked in the sales department of an international technology company and from there moved on to a position as an associate in the investment banking department of a large Wall Street firm. Derek was progressing up in the ranks at the firm, but in the tumult of the late 1980s the firm went under. He contemplated another investment banking position but was solicited to join the staff of the state treasurer in a different state. Largely for family reasons (he and his wife had recently had their first child), he opted to leave New York City for a more manageable and affordable environment. The position in question dealt with bond issuance, and Derek reasoned that the experience on the other side of the table would be helpful in securing another private sector finance job.

Along the way, though, he became known and his work was respected, and he was recruited to become the head of the state lottery. While a public sector position, Derek was not really attracted to it because of this character:

One of my long-term goals had been to run an organization, to be a CEO at some point. I really wanted to do it relatively quickly. It may have been unrealistic to do that. But I had said I had a life goal that I had wanted to be the CEO of an organization in order to be on top of an organization by the time I was 35. And in this case I did this about three months prior to my 36th birthday. So, in some respects—and—and, you know, it sounds a little crazy, but we all do this at different points and different parts of our lives—I did have to kind of go back to the life goal and say, “Wait a
minute, here’s an opportunity to do this.” You know, you’ve got this shorter-term goal, which was 2 years and back to Wall Street, but here somebody’s actually offering a chance to meet one of your life goals and so what if it’s another 3 or 4 or 5 years? To meet a life goal you take a little bit of a risk—you don’t know anything about this lottery stuff, you know—and see what happens. And as a matter of fact, it might give you greater private sector opportunities going forward. And that’s ultimately why I did it.

In fact, Derek says that had he been offered the CEO position of a similar private entity: “I would have jumped at the private sector opportunity because that was just you know, a lot more literally a fulfillment of my goal.”

He moved back to the private sector after the lottery, working for a large commercial bank. After additional tumult in the financial markets, Derek left the bank for his current management consultant role.

Summary of Derek

Number of positions: 7

Number of transitions: 2

Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/pr

Frasier.

Frasier is head of the development (fundraising) operation for an internationally recognized, state-of-the-art biomedical research facility.

After Frasier left college, an initial interest in public service brought him to his first position working in government, working to develop a county-wide park system, a job he initially found appealing because of his environmental interests. He remained in the job for several years before becoming attracted to the idea of fundraising for nonprofits. He moved from public service to development, where
he has held a series of increasingly responsible positions in higher education and health care.

Frasier states that he “chose this [development] work because of the chance for the personal satisfaction of tackling the world’s problems, after finding that government service was not going to take me there.” He also found too much “gotcha” gaming in the public sector and welcomed the shift to nonprofits, where he could be “relatively insulated from the nonsense.”

Summary of Frasier

Number of positions: 9
Number of transitions: 1
Sequence of transitions: pu/nfp

Danny.

Danny is president of a company specializing in the development of residential projects for colleges and universities.

Danny got his first significant professional position in the mobile home industry after dropping out of college. He decided after a time to return for a degree, and financed his education at a state university by working in the facilities department. While both jobs he had held at that point related to facilities, he chose to pursue his studies on the helping side, in counseling. He received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in counseling psychology, going on to a full-time position in state higher education in a counseling office.

Before long he determined that counseling was not for him, that it was too “slow-paced” and that it took too long to get things done. So he shifted back to
the facilities side of public higher education, where he came to hold a series of
positions of increasing responsibility in public higher education over a number of
years. While he was not engaged in a for-profit business, he considered his job
as in effect a private sector one, and referred to his work as “for profit” while
acknowledging that the larger entity he worked for was a governmental body.

In time, Danny transitioned to the private sector, where the nature of his
work—project development—is quite similar to his previous work.

Summary of Danny

Number of positions: 5
Number of transitions: 2
Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/pr

Richard.

Richard is executive director of a statewide community foundation.

Richard has spent his life essentially in one city. After graduating from an
Ivy League university in that city with a degree in applied math and a
concentration in sociology, Richard went on to a career in commercial banking.
He moved through a variety of positions at several banks, serving as president of
one major regional bank before its acquisition by an international bank.

He was then recruited to the position of director of development at his
alma mater. His first reaction to being sounded out was negative. In fact, he
was not even aware that a development director raised money—he assumed it
would have something to do with real estate development. However, the world of
banking was changing in his state as a result of the takeover of most significant
regional banks by international ones, and he thought he would give the position a try. He held that position for 4 years.

Richard viewed himself as bringing his core private sector skills to bear on mission-based work. While in fundraising, he considered his staff to be a “national sales force” and donors to be “customers,” putting in place for the first time a bonus incentive program for development staff. As he put it, “I literally went back to my notes on a bank—commercial banking program, templates, approach, calculations, and all that—and adapted it.”

While successful in many ways, Richard continued to feel a bit like a fish out of water because he was the only non-academic in the senior management of the university and tended to feel that estrangement culturally. He addressed both this cultural issue as well as his own professional education there as follows:

As you well know, in an academic setting everybody’s got their initials, and I remember joking with the provost one time. I said, “You know, I feel kind of funny.” He said, “Well, what initials do you want?” So I came up with RWE, which was Real World Experience, and I was damn sure the only one sitting around that table with that nonacademic setting. So then this comes up and what I saw here was, as I said before, that combination of what I did at the bank, especially when I was present where I was very active in the community, very much part of trying to solve things, trying to be community-minded, dealing with the nonprofit sector on occasion. What I did at [University X] was really truly learning philanthropy; I learned the difference between philanthropy and fundraising. Fundraising that I initially said no to was in my mind saying, “Can you give a thousand dollars for this or will your organization buy a table for that?” and twisting your arm and doing it, you know, “Do me a favor,” as opposed to what I learned about philanthropy was that true philanthropy is inspiring and enabling people to do what they want to do and what makes them feel good to the point where instead of me saying, “Thank you for buying that table,” they say, “Thank you for helping me make this $10 million gift.”
With this experience in hand, Richard was subsequently recruited to be executive director of a statewide community foundation, an entity that raised money philanthropically in order to support programs of public and community benefit in his home state. The foundation essentially supports and supplements programs that might otherwise be governmental in nature, but the entity is structured as a 501(c)(3).

Summary of Richard

Number of positions: 3
Number of transitions: 1
Sequence of transitions: pr/nfp

**Foster.**

Foster is director of professional development for a public university foundation.

Foster majored in chemistry and food science and after graduation worked for five years as a high school teacher, a position that he took because he was “22 years old, single. I didn’t know what I wanted to do and certainly money wasn’t a big deal.” He left this position for a position in the private sector, in the food industry, mostly in order to increase his compensation.

Foster spent 25 years in this industry, eventually becoming director of training and development for a Fortune 500 company. Foster was able to retire from this company with a retirement package, but he considered himself too young to become a lot less active. He was able to secure a position teaching at
a local college but after a time was able to move to a management position in human resources at a large public entity.

His private sector experience consisted of working for a “global company, a massive company.” Still, when he came to the public entity “it was driving your car and all of a sudden putting both feet on the brakes, because dealing with the bureaucracy the key word was ‘slow, slow, slower, and slowest . . . we don’t manage performance here. We manage activity.”

Foster departed the public sector for a hybrid entity—a public university foundation, which is connected to a state university but structured as a 501(c)(3) and is technically and functionally not part of state government. Foster considers the foundation to be “a nonprofit business” even though “not everybody here understands it yet . . . We can definitely tell you if we are succeeding or not—succeeding as we measure against our campaign goals.”

Foster concluded:

In all honesty, if I talk to people who are younger and want to start their career and they say “I’m thinking about working at a state organization,” I caution them, because I think there are some, there is still some thinking that goes on, an approach that goes on, that would never fly outside of this [public] environment . . . And so I kind of caution people, younger people. If you’re going to start your career, you might be better off starting off in a business environment and then make a move to this, because it might be more difficult to move from here into business. Because I think the challenges and the expectations are so much more high-paced, so much more demanding in a business environment. But at the same time, I think that government, academia could use so much of what’s going on out there.

Summary of Foster

Number of positions: 5

Number of transitions: 3
Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/nfp/pu

Individuals Who Are “Called”

Some interviewees explicitly or implicitly are “called” to perform good work and will follow that calling wherever it takes them, even if it crosses sectors. That is, the sector makes little difference; what matters is following the inner call.

**Jed.**

Jed is general counsel at a large public university.

Jed grew up in a religious household, and one in which education was, as he put it, a “core theme.” Jed developed an interest in public affairs early on, and was only in his teens when he determined his life would involve law, service, and higher education in some fashion.

He spent much time thinking about what his calling might be. He attended law school but instead of moving to a service-related area went directly to a major law firm. He made this move in part to pay his law school bills but also in part to understand how the business world worked. This latter motivation in itself was instrumental to goals he’d earlier set: Learning about the for-profit world was important, he reasoned, if he was going to have to deal with it once he moved to his calling.

Following several years at the law firm, Jed moved to a federal agency directly involved with enforcement of civil rights issues. After several years there, he felt he had “made a difference” but also came to think he had “sort of done what [he] felt like [he] could usefully in terms of making major changes.” Also he
became increasingly concerned about things “slowing down in the bureaucracy.” He then made a transition to one of the central nonprofits in the country dealing with issues of higher education. This cemented his idea to combine law and higher education. He left the nonprofit for several positions in public higher education because that path both connected him with his calling and helped pay the bills better than the nonprofit had.

**Summary of Jed**

- Number of positions: 5
- Number of transitions: 3
- Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/nfp/pu

*Seth.*

Seth is a life insurance agent.

After a series of odd jobs after completing college in the early 1970s, Seth’s first real professional job was with a city board of education, working with inner-city children on a reading program. He then worked at a public psychiatric hospital in the same city and developed an interest in health care and social work.

This experience convinced him to return for a graduate degree in health care policy. He used this degree to move on to several positions in health care planning for municipal agencies in two states.

A friend he worked with in the last such position “was always talking about being entrepreneurial and dress[ing] for success.” One day, when the ratings agencies came to meet with city officials, Seth struck up a conversation with an
analyst from the ratings agency. They compared compensation levels. The
ratings analyst, who was about Seth’s age, made almost twice what Seth made.¹

The ratings analyst was leaving for public finance investment banking (a
step up even then), knew the agency was staffing up quickly in public finance,
and essentially offered Seth her job, which he took. Relative to leaving public
service, Seth remarked that he

saw it as going . . . as turning the experiences and education that I’d had
into leveraging that into something more . . . something that can be sold in
the private market. I saw that very much as a private sector thing. I saw
that it’s leveraging experience and education. And [the ratings agency]
was a nice place to work for the most part.

Eventually Seth himself stepped up to public finance investment banking,
albeit at a compensation level that seems paltry by today’s Wall Street
standards². He was successful in this endeavor, finding that he was good at the
transition from the more organized environments he had encountered in
government and ratings agencies to the “eat-what-you-kill” ethos of Wall Street
investment banking.

The rating service there was really not too much action. It was really more
of what you would think of being, you know, if you were at some large
governmental agency you would get an assignment, you’d work on the
assignment, you go to meetings, rating committees, there’s not much
going on. Investment banking was a little like being a hunter; it was an
eat-what-you-kill environment for the most part, and you didn’t have to bag
something every day, but if you went a year or so without bagging
something, you were in trouble.

¹. Seth made about $18,000 and the analyst made a little over $30,000—a princely sum in those
innocent days on Wall Street!
². $58,000
From there, Seth moved to one of the large federal corporations that dealt with the capital markets and that straddled the lines between public and private. He disliked everything about this experience.

[The federal financial corporation] was interesting because it had all the components of hunting, but you are on a game farm, so they would bring the animals to you and you could sit there and punk away all day, and you had an unlimited supply of animals to shoot at because you made the market. [The corporation] made the market and everybody had to come to you, and they paid themselves and we all made outrageous money. It was . . . it’s shocking how much money people, at the upper reaches anyway, make, and I was fortunate to land in the upper reaches, and I doubled my investment banking compensation, basically through . . . there’s not a lot of creativity, they just sit there and it’s like, as I said it’s like being on a game farm so, a little bit like working for the government with super private sector wages.

Seth went to a law firm with a higher education consulting practice for several years. During this time he had an experience that was to influence him greatly:

I went to the funeral [of my brother-in-law, [and] one of the things that occurred to me was to go into the life insurance business. They didn’t have, my brother-in-law didn’t have any life insurance. He left his family in a very bleak position. There were three little girls, his wife had breast cancer, and there was no money. Yeah, it was definitely [that] I actually had a calling, I would have to say that. I mean, I was looking for something so, you know, it was like I was looking for that burning bush, but when I saw the situation it hit me and it hit me right then, and the funeral was over the weekend and on Monday morning I called my insurance agent to talk about how to get into the business. It would’ve been a difficult transition, but I was thinking about it. In fact, I pretty much decided that that’s what I had to do, and I was sitting at my desk at [the law firm] thinking about those things when a call came from the person who was nominated to be treasurer about a job [in the state treasurer’s office] . . .

Seth took the job with the treasurer, which focused on the management of bond issuance in the state. But later, with a turnover in administrations, Seth
thought it opportune to leave and used the opportunity to revive his earlier idea about becoming a life insurance agent.

Seth considers the two best jobs he has ever had to have been the state treasury job, which conferred on him substantial power and influence, and his current job as a life insurance agent. He considers the latter to be very strongly in mission-based while at the same time providing both financial freedom and the ability to hunt one’s own game rather than depend on others.

Summary of Seth

Number of positions: 13
Number of transitions: 6
Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/pr/pu/pr/pu/pr

Jon.

Jon is currently Chief Operating Officer of the American division of one of the world’s largest and most visible NGOs.

Jon believes his professional direction was shaped by only a few early mentors. The first of these was his father, an accountant who instilled in Jon a love of entrepreneurship and small companies. Jon graduated with a degree in advanced technology and first went to work for a technology firm, where he added to his technical strengths by building expertise in strategy and in management. His second mentor, at this firm, showed Jon how to convert plans into action.

From there he took on a number of increasingly senior positions at a technology and telecom giant, rising to the level of head of strategy and business
development. Jon met his third mentor at this firm; he showed Jon how to use his skills to accomplish large-scale transformation in a large entity.

From here, Jon’s career became increasingly entrepreneurial. He found himself becoming involved as an individual with technology startups. Some of these were successful; some were not. This led to a kind of boom-or-bust mentality that increasingly troubled him.

One day Jon fielded a call from a headhunter looking for recommendations for people to fill his current job. Jon, almost without thinking and certainly without any forethought, suggested his own name. Wondering what had made him do such a thing, he then put the conversation out of his mind.

That night his wife woke him in the middle of the night and asked pointedly whether he was planning to continue doing startups for the rest of his career. It was a critical question in both senses of the word. Jon’s wife had also grown tired of the boom-and-bust roller coaster and the constant travel. Without recounting the details of his conversation that day, he noted that he answered by asking her what she would think of the idea of his devoting the rest of his life to service. She simply said, “Go for it” and went back to sleep. Jon then reports having a near-religious experience:

It was like at that very moment, I came so awake. It was . . . there were no lights on. And [my wife] just was able to roll over and go to sleep. And I couldn’t sleep a wink. Because I felt called that moment. And there’s nothing rational about that moment. I’m staring up at the ceiling and I’m thinking, “What is going on here?” I feel like my heart is racing. I feel I’m hurtling toward something.” I’m feeling all these feelings, and none of them are rational. You know what I mean? At this point I’m not asking myself, “How much money am I going to make?” . . . It felt like God. It felt
like what people say, “to be called.” And to be called means that for a moment your free will is subjugated to forces greater than you. My own self-interest, the unknown of a new sector, could be scary. I wasn’t worried about that. No idea what the compensation would be. I wasn’t even thinking about it. What I was thinking about was all of a sudden I almost felt like I needed to be on the other side of the looking glass, and I didn’t know why. I just needed to. I needed to do this. And it was transformative.

Jon left the private sector and took on the COO role for one of the world’s most visible and prominent NGOs, where he is very happy in his job.

Summary of Jon

Number of positions: 9
Number of transitions: 1
Sequence of transitions: pr/nfp

Professionals

The individuals classified as professionals view their professional identity as central and are relatively indifferent to sector as they seek to develop their professional skills.

Sara.

Sara is currently vice president of human resources at a private college, a college that is highly regarded and is also considered hip and cool by students because of its niche.

Sara also has a professional thread running through her career choices, and it is also human resources. Sara was interested in majoring in psychology in college and considered a career in that field. She was put off by the difficulties posed by that prospect and, urged by her businessman father, opted instead for
a degree in business. In turn, she found her way to the human-resources side in terms of study.

While in college making this decision, she worked at a summer camp tutoring and counseling urban high school students. She found that she “loved the thought of it, but being in the trenches with, you know, with the kids with rough lives and, you know, I think I need to try this HR thing.” That led in turn to a private sector position in human resources.

She transitioned to human resources at a highly visible nonprofit, one with a national profile. There were multiple reasons for the switch, but once I got there one of the things I loved was when people asked where I worked, I said, “Oh, I work at XYZ,” and people immediately knew where it was and think, “Oh, that must be a cool place to work.” So you get that kind of affirmation of like, “Oh, that’s neat, you know, you work there.” So it wasn’t even so much about my career or what I did, it was about where I worked.

Once there, though, she developed her “taste” for the nonprofit world and “absolutely loved it.” A series of positions in HR with increasing responsibility followed. These were mainly in nonprofits, though she worked as well at a well-known public policy and research company, which she felt to be highly “mission-oriented” despite its for-profit status. She likes the mission aspect because she is aware that HR directors are often viewed as “evil” and as management’s handmaidens, so “it just feels better to me” to make tough decisions knowing the organization has a higher purpose.

She enjoys her current job and, as with her first nonprofit, is definitely attracted by what people consider the “coolness” of the college. She will probably stay in the nonprofit sector and is unlikely to return to a for-profit. She
would definitely not consider government because of her fear that she would “just die there in terms of being able to move things forward.”

Summary of Sara

Number of positions: 5
Number of transitions: 3
Sequence of transitions: pr/nfp/pr/nfp

Veronica.

Veronica is currently unemployed, having left her position in marketing at a top law firm after the 2008 economic downturn. She is looking for a job and strongly considering a return to the nonprofit sector after having spent many years in the for-profit sector.

Veronica comes from “a family of service.” She was a psychology major in college who originally aimed for a doctorate in clinical psychology. Given the perceived competitiveness of such programs she opted instead to get her degree in clinical social work and to move into that field. Her first professional experiences were working for two public social service agencies, following which she continued a social-work focus at several nonprofit hospitals. She ultimately came to think, “This is not for me . . . I’m doing good work in terms of helping people, but this environment is just too much.”

She retooled in terms of training, moving to an individual practice with an orientation toward cognitive therapy. She also felt frustrated by “this thing called therapy” because “I want[ed] to see results from my work, and I [was] not really seeing them.” After spending some time back in an organization dealing with
neglected and abused children, she started to doubt whether “this [was] how I want[ed] to spend the rest of my life.”

A career counselor’s intervention got her thinking about the business world, something that, given her family history, she had not considered to any great extent. She made the move to a marketing position at a large professional services firm, and from there commenced a very successful career marketing in both corporate and professional service environments. The 2008 business downturn and management changes recently left her without a job. She is considering a return to the not-for-profit world but is not actively considering government.

Summary of Veronica

Number of positions: 6
Number of transitions: 3
Sequence of transitions: pu/nfp/pu/pr

Michelle.

Michelle is unemployed and looking for work. Her most recent experience was as director of human resources for a top-50 law firm. She has worked in public and nonprofit settings and for her next position is leaning toward going back to a nonprofit.

Michelle’s background, like that of Sara and Veronica, is human resources, and like them she has a professional thread connecting her career transitions. Her public experience took place early in her career, when she worked at two separate public medical and residential treatment facilities. She
then moved to a large, well-regarded teaching hospital active in “cutting-edge research,” which to her made for a “fabulous, fabulous experience.” This positive experience led her to a series of progressively more senior positions at hospitals in the region. Over time, having built up a solid reputation and good contacts in the health care industry, she started her own HR outsourcing firm specializing in interim placements. This proved to be successful, and her experience stretched beyond health care to higher education and law firms.

A large law firm that had used her in an interim capacity decided to make her a full-time offer, and Michelle accepted. The law firm she worked at was “extraordinarily profitable” but what she found interesting was that, in her mind, it was not your typical for-profit organization. There was a big part of it that was a little bit, you know, it’s so closely aligned with [Ivy League University X] . . . so it had this academic piece to it . . . I still sort of felt connected, I think, when I was at [the law firm] to these not-for-profit organizations [that I had previously worked for] . . . You know, the way the associates come in, they were like students. I could really, really still do very important things in the world somehow by making [the law firm] a really great place to work.

Michelle left the law firm after the 2008 downturn. In terms of what to do next, Michelle remarked as follows:

I’ve been exploring what I want to do next, and it’s very interesting that I should be talking to you right now, because I’ve really decided to start a job search and the areas that really appeal to me are academia and healthcare. I do want to go back to where the mission is, I think. But never say never. Now that I’ve gone back and forth and seen these different organizations, it’s not as clear-cut or as difficult or different as I thought when I was 30 years or 29 years old.

Summary of Michelle

Number of positions: 8

Number of transitions: 3
Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/nfp/pr

Sam.

Sam is currently the controller at a public university foundation, the entity connected to a public university charged with raising philanthropic funds. While the state university is part of state government, its associated foundation is semiautonomous and structured as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) entity.

Sam, in his late thirties, was one of the younger sector switchers interviewed. After receiving a degree in business in the early 1990s, Sam worked at several for-profit firms as business manager and office manager. He rose rapidly in the ranks as he moved from firm to firm, eventually working in a management capacity for the consulting side of one of the large national accounting firms. He enjoyed the people and the work but grew increasingly concerned about the kinds of demands the private sector can put on employees, particularly employees, like Sam, who had just started a family.

Sam grew up a latchkey kid and had made a commitment to be around for his family. Increasingly, he was finding that the time demanded of him by his employer was making that difficult.

He applied for, and got, a position in budget management at a state entity. He appreciated the lessened demands on his lifestyle but soon developed a different concern. As he put it, “Most of the organizations that I had gone through, I had moved up in the organization rather quickly, so I assumed that it would be similar.” That proved not to be the case. Instead Sam found a “pecking order.”
When I left [the accounting firm], one of the partners of the firm had told me, he goes, “You’re going to find it tough going because you’re not that type.” And I was like, “OK, well, you know, thank you, but I’m still going to make that leap.” And it wasn’t until I got here for a while that I understood where he was going with it . . . You know, when I came in, and once I learned my job a little bit, I started questioning things and saying, “Well, why don’t we do it this way or here’s a better way of doing it.” And I’d bring it up to the management staff and it was always like, “Hey that sounds great, we’ll talk about it,” but it never really went anywhere. In corporate that was everyone, you know, you clung to it and it was acted upon rather quickly because it might mean getting results and information quicker to management, which is what they’re looking for. But there isn’t that urgency in state government that that there is in corporate, and I found myself having to kind of hold back at times, because you don’t want to ruffle too many feathers, or I don’t know if people get concerned at their job or that year I just too much of a go-getter, but I just found myself like, “OK, I got to slow it down.”

Sam attributes some of the problem he experienced to the power of public employee unions in his state.

When the opportunity arose to move to a nonprofit foundation, Sam took it. He reasoned that “more of the funding was from other sources other than state government, [and] in dealing with them there was more of a business, they’re sales, you know, getting gifts in, and there are measures that people should be held accountable to.”

Summary of Sam

Number of positions: 5
Number of transitions: 1
Sequence of transitions: pr/pu

Rilla.

Rilla is senior director of communications and community engagement at a large international charity.
Rilla comes from a family involved with education, one that held “high ethical moral beliefs and believed in contributing in a positive way to the world and money was not the biggest driver.” From an early age she visualized herself as involved with education.

As an undergraduate she was fortunate to find a way to become involved as a student designee to committees involved with major changes at her college, a process that brought her closely in touch with an activist president and made Rilla aware of many of the specific dynamics of higher education. She decided to go back for a graduate degree, and opted for an MBA rather than a degree in education even though her plan was to find a college position after graduation.

With the job market in bad shape at the time of her graduation, she did not move to higher education right away but instead worked for two unions, the second of which organized in the higher education sphere. From there, she received her first position in higher education, managing an MBA program, and went on to a more senior position in marketing at another university.

It was great. I was there for 5 years. What I couldn’t see was how, without a Ph.D., I could have a really advanced career in higher education. In retrospect, I probably could have. Um, there are lots of other paths I didn’t see at the time, and I was also curious about the for-profit world. And my thinking was, “I can always come back to higher education. But if I don’t get out pretty early in my career, I think it’s unlikely that I’ll get out, and if I want to go and see what that’s like, I better do it pretty early in my career.” So I’d been out 8 years at that point. It was time to go and give this [the private sector] a try.

She joined the fixed-income department at a major investment bank just before the 1987 stock market crash. She soon concluded:

The job was awful, the culture was awful, throwing people out the windows, getting rid of jobs starting three and a half months after I got
there, was horrible. Living that kind of insanely intense and pretty meaningless life was horrible. Working with people whose sole motivation was money was horrible. I made a lot of money, and I hated every minute of it. And it was a relief when I got laid off a year and a half later. I was like, “Thank you.” Because I didn’t have the courage to just go.

But her next position was also in the private sector, doing international marketing for one of the then-Big Five accounting firms, at what was at that point “the largest professional services office of anybody—any organization in the world.” This was much more to her liking. She found the opportunity “staggering . . . great minds, great projects, local, regional, national, international projects to work on. The chance to work on marketing projects with world headquarters.” She then transitioned to a more senior position doing international marketing at one of the world’s leading human resource consulting firms, another job she was very happy with.

She thinks it was probably a mistake to leave this firm, but when a headhunter called with an offer to go back to a senior marketing position at one of the nation’s leading universities, she decided to move, considering that the shift might be a “capstone” given her long-term focus on higher education. It was a return to a nonprofit. And there was the subtler benefit of working for a known world-class entity: “The opportunity to work within a staggering brand, now you’re talking—[University X] is just, you know, what a brand!”

What she found was that while it was a “great business model” it was a “fantastic rat hole in terms of its management. You know, without wishing to damn them, just it couldn’t have been a more horrible year. It was just a nightmare.”
She returned to the private sector, not to the corporate sector but to the professional services world that she had come to appreciate. This time, she moved to marketing positions at several law firms. Her professional strengths grew to the point at which she set up her own firm and operated, for a time, independently. The firm was then acquired by another, larger marketing firm.

At some point she began to sense that something was missing. And what’s been missing has been this sense of the mission of the organization being something that was important to me. [Investment banks, consulting firms], law firms, you know, it’s a—it’s a stretch to say that those are somehow really about contributing to the world. There has always been something missing except when I worked in higher education. And helping students find their way, creating an atmosphere for students, that was great. I loved the student advising piece, I loved the admissions piece of actually sitting down with candidates one-on-one and helping them find their way through that process. But the rest of my career has been thin on giving back.

It was at this point that she was sounded out for, and ultimately accepted, her current senior position at a large international charity.

Summary of Rilla

Number of positions: 12

Number of transitions: 6

Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/nfp/pr/nfp/pr/nfp

Joanne.

Joanne is controller at a public university foundation.

The thread running through Joanne’s career is a professional affiliation: accounting. Following her undergraduate degree in accounting, Joanne took a series of private sector jobs in accounting: a Big Eight firm, a national corporation, a smaller regional accounting firm. Work–life balance played a large
role in her shifts within the private sector, and it was the main factor in her
decision to move to a foundation connected to a public university.

Summary of Joanne

Number of positions: 6

Number of transitions: 1

Sequence of transitions: pr/pu

Patrick.

Patrick is general counsel at a private college.

Patrick is an attorney. After receiving his law degree, Patrick and his wife
both joined the ranks of a leading regional law firm, where he found the work
“intellectually interesting. We did a lot of cutting-edge stuff and some precedent-setting cases.”

Still:

[My wife] and I never were the sort of people who thought, as many
people do coming out of law school, that that was necessarily where we
were going to be for the rest of our lives. And so we had . . . even before
we started thinking about leaving, we you know, we’re the type who don’t
live above our means. We saved money, and we sort of always had the
retirement plan of two lawyers, no kids. So we found ourselves in a
situation where we actually were able to make a choice, which was really
quite nice.

The first choice they made was simply to depart for New York, where each
spent six months doing whatever he or she wanted, which for Patrick involved an
intense bout of cooking lessons. Following this interlude, both decided that
higher education would be the next step.

Patrick’s initial position was in the counsel’s office at a large public
university. He found the job challenging but was often troubled by its public
nature, in particular the difficulties posed from a legal point of view when public universities become subject to cumbersome and poorly informed bureaucratic review and hardball politics. Patrick made the decision subsequently to transition to a private college, the one that he now serves as general counsel.

Summary of Patrick

Number of positions: 3
Number of transitions: 2
Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/nfp

Protean Characters

These interviewees seem relatively indifferent to sector as they constantly seek to reinvent themselves.

*Melinda.*

Melinda is self-employed as an executive coach.

Melinda has made many changes back and forth between sectors over the course of her career, too many to summarize easily. The long arc of her career is as follows, in chronological order:

- Positions in business (private sector)
- A senior position working for municipal government in the finance area (public sector)
- Investment banking on behalf of public entities (private sector)
- Two senior positions in large, statewide public authorities, the latter as executive director (public sector)
– Treasurer and CFO of a large HMO (nonprofit)
– A position with a software company (private sector)
– CFO at another HMO (nonprofit)
– Building a new venture startup in the public power area (private sector)
– A senior position at another health-related not-for-profit (nonprofit)
– Self-employed in executive coaching (self-employed private sector)

When initially asked what she does for a living, Melinda did not respond by mentioning a position. Rather, her response was:

I fix things, I get things done and I make things better, and that's really what I've done through my whole career working in private sector, public sector, healthcare, financial services, and now as an executive coach working one-on-one with people to help them be more successful and get more gratification out of their careers. And, just to elaborate, fixing things, I—I'm a change agent. I love turnarounds, I always think that we can make process and organization and relationships with people more effective, more productive, and I've done that a number of cases. Also, I like to get things done. So that's involved overseeing very large-scale projects and driving the process, being very flexible, knowing that he initial plan is always going to be adjusted. You hit obstacles; how do you come up with plan B, plan C, whatever it needs to take care of the objective? And making things better in those rare cases when you're not—not dealing with an organization or an individual who's in real trouble but really wants to work from a strong base and get things even better. I can do that too.

Summary of Melinda

Number of positions: 11
Number of transitions: 7
Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/pr/pu/nfp/pr/nfp/pr

Rudy.

Rudy works in a senior capacity in a trade association promoting closer economic, business, and trade ties with an Asian nation.
Rudy’s career, like that of Melinda, is hard to summarize easily. Rudy’s career consists of a series of moves across sectors as follows:

– A position with a U.S. congressman
– A position in the Governor’s Office as a senior advisor and policy aide
– Several positions in investment banking
– A position as an independent consultant in the finance industry
– Several high level positions in federal agencies
– A relatively prominent role in a successful presidential campaign
– Working for an ambassador to a foreign nation
– His current position in international trade

Like Melinda, Rudy is strongly oriented in a fundamental way to public issues and views his private experience as not moving him far from such issues. He has had opportunities to move into the private sector in positions that bore no relationship with politics and government, but has spurned such offers. Indeed, at times he has taken on significant financial risk in making his shifts, particularly his last shift into the public sector, but he has always been optimistic that he will find a way to use his strong network of contacts to succeed in any environment.

Summary of Rudy

Number of positions: 12
Number of transitions: 4
Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu/pr/nfp
Penelope.

For the past 20 years, Penelope has been president and principal of a firm she founded that provides planning advice to higher education institutions.

As far back as adolescence, Penelope thought that one day she would run her own business and has always valued the idea of being independent. Her interest in higher education developed in her undergraduate years. She was particularly interested in how everything came together in a public setting, and so her first position was working for the department of higher education in her state. She rotated through a variety of areas in the department, building her expertise in academic affairs, financial affairs, institutional research, and facilities.

Her plan at this point was always to run her own firm eventually. She reasoned that the best way to do this would be to complete a stint in government, to then move to one or more institutions, and from there to start her own firm. Generally speaking, she followed that plan.

From the department of higher education she moved to the flagship public university in her state, where she did facility and space planning. While her plan for her career provided a “pull” factor for the move, she acknowledges a “push” factor too: the fact that state government, including the department of higher education, had a “little bit of stigma.” While in state government, she wanted to “push things to the edge of what was acceptable without pushing over the edge” and therefore wasn’t herself “the consummate bureaucrat” at a place “where everything is by the rules. It was like, for me—how can we change the rules?”
Yet she knew that her department was generally viewed as “bookkeepers [who] are just going to tick things off and be done with it.”

She found that the university had its own slow aspects but feels that in her time there she was successful building a facility planning focus where previously there had been none. Prodded in part by a desire to move as a result of a personal relationship she was in, she ultimately opted to go off on her own, building a series of consulting relationships into an ongoing and viable business.

**Summary of Penelope**

Number of positions: 3

Number of transitions: 2

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr

**Lev.**

Lev is president of a small for-profit college.

Lev graduated with a design degree. After working for a short time in several private sector positions in design and marketing, Lev and a partner soon established their own company, a sports accessory equipment firm built around their desire to design better products. They built the business into a successful venture that was bought by a larger firm, after which Lev became involved with several startups and then established another company offering brand management services. That firm developed a client base that ranged from regional to international, and included a number of “name brand” for profit and nonprofit entities.
One of the nonprofits with whom Lev worked, a university with an entrepreneurial reputation, was very brand- and business-savvy and hired Lev in the position of chief strategy officer. He held this position for several years but was asked to become the president of a small for-profit college, which is the position he now holds.

Other than the short time he spent in a large corporation during his first job, Lev has never thought of his work as comprising “a job” in the classic sense. “I think of it as being on a project, so . . . even though I have always had a job, technically . . . I never think of it this way.” Lev considers himself now to be a “specialty postsecondary-education expert, an expert in specialty programs . . . I think of myself as a product-development-oriented, marketing-oriented CEO, and I’ve taken that and applied it to specialty postsecondary education.”

In Lev’s mind there is nothing special about postsecondary education. “It could be a chicken farm, really, if I found, and this is a defining thing for me personally, if I could find a motivating mission in the eggs, among the chickens.”

So mission makes a difference to Lev, though he acknowledges he has found “or rationalized” his way to a mission in each position. For Lev, mission is “doing something of transcending value beyond the commercials, beyond the financial reward.” But by this he does not mean to suggest non-self-regarding behavior for the greater good. Lev finds mission when he can tap into his creativity. At his first company, mission was “about forming something that allowed us to have an expression, a place to express our creativity . . . I’m proud
of [what I do], don’t tell me it’s all about, oh, non-self-regarding, that’s not about me."

Summary of Lev

Number of positions: 7
Number of transitions: 2
Sequence of transitions: pr/nfp/pr

Price.

Price is currently a college president.

Price grew up the son of a dentist who was also a gifted musician and intellectual. He fondly recalls that his bedtime reading consisted of things like Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, sentence by sentence. His father’s happiest moments came, he believed, when he struggled to work through difficult material and worked hard to express it to others. Price believes this tendency was passed on to him.

Although he became highly involved with academic pursuits in college, he also came to feel that the academic world suffered from “inbreeding and sterility” and was increasingly drawn to understanding “how the world actually worked. It always puzzled me how people got other people to do things and how things actually worked and where these hidden levers of power were in our society.” He concluded that one of the best ways to gain these understandings would be to go to law school.

Although he had no intention of using the degree to practice law in a traditional sense, the school he attended in that era was heavily focused on
sending its graduates to big law firms. Price followed the path of least resistance to a large firm, where he ultimately chaired the environmental practice and was involved in a great deal of litigation. At the same time, he commenced a serious involvement on the board of his alma mater, a large public university. Over time, he rose to become board chair.

That involvement was meaningful to Price, and it caused him to reflect back on the voice of his father in his head. He recalled that when he had asked his father if something was worth doing, his father would respond that the question was meaningless. He says his father’s voice told him, “It’s not whether it’s worth it. It’s whether it’s worth it to you. And if it is worth it to you, then do it, because you are never going to need to explain why you are choosing one respected career over another.”

When a headhunter sounded him out about a college presidency, he decided to consider it. “And when I looked at it, I really flipped. I loved the place.” He feels that in his position he has been able to connect his initial love of academic interests with the real-world issues that he previously considered opposites.

Summary of Price

Number of positions: 2

Number of transitions: 1

Sequence of transitions: pr/pu
Raymond.

Raymond is the president of a highly regarded college with a national and international presence and reputation.

Raymond grew up with multiple talents and interests, from physics to music to sports to public affairs. He didn’t exactly drift as he went to college and matured, though he had a hard time at first deciding which path to take. His varied interests were all real and deep, and he could not quite decide which of the disparate threads he should hang onto and follow—science, arts, or athletics? So he did something quite unexpected: When he met an African who said his country needed teachers, Raymond signed up. Raymond taught in Africa but at the same time spun off various entrepreneurial, bottom-up initiatives.

He returned to the States with an interest in using management to make a difference in the developing world. He received an advanced degree and returned to an overseas post involving promotion of local economic development while preserving indigenous cultures.

On another return to the States, he made a dramatic shift and joined one of the nation’s largest and most prominent management consulting firms. He succeeded in this position, though he felt like a fish out of water culturally. He later saw an opportunity to found his own company, which he did with the blessing of the management consulting firm. That company went on to great success and was listed as one of Fortune’s 100 best companies to work for. After successfully building the company, he considered what new challenge
would be appropriate for him. A college presidency beckoned. He took the position and is extremely satisfied with his decision.

Summary of Raymond

Number of positions: 6

Number of transitions: 4

Sequence of transitions: pu/nfp/pr/nfp

Grant.

Grant is the dean of a business school.

Grant’s original career goal, from an early age, was a position in the State Department, and his undergraduate and graduate degrees were both in the area of international diplomacy. While working on his doctorate he took a position in the Ministry of Planning in a developing country. He realized in that job that international banks were themselves “economic development agencies, giving lots of money away” and began to think about his next career move—business or academia?

An advisor told him to do business first, as experience in this sector would distinguish him later in the academic world. So he developed, in effect, “a game plan” of two more careers following his first one in government. His next would be in international banking and the following one in academia.

Grant followed the plan, working for 20 years at a major international bank, at first on the lending side but then gravitating to the “deal” side of investment banking. He then commenced a second 20-year career in higher
education that he deems to be “public service,” first at a large public university and now at a smaller, prestigious private university.

Summary of Grant

Number of positions: 5

Number of transitions: 3

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu/nfp

Susan.

Susan is president of a public university.

Susan has an academic background, having gone directly from undergraduate school to graduate school, where she received a Ph.D. in history. She then secured a position as a tenure-track assistant professor of history at a small, well-regarded private college in northern New England.

After several years on the tenure track, she decided to step off of it, in part because she was used to city life and northern New England did not appeal to her. However, rather than seek another academic position, she joined the private sector in commercial banking. In the 1980s, while there was a glut in the market for Ph.D.s in the humanities, large commercial banks needed new talent, and some of those banks created programs to convert otherwise unemployable academics into bankers, remaking them, as Susan joked, as “useful.” She was only one of two in a class of 50 such academics to have given up an actual tenure-track job for the opportunity. She was, she says, “looking to explore other
possibilities. . . . It was gut-wrenching, and I just decided to do it—but I always thought I would stay involved in academics in some way.”

She developed a highly successful career as a commercial banker and stayed in this sphere for many years. The decision to return to higher education happened in a backhanded way. Her bank had decided to open its own internal “university” and more or less pressured her to take the job because of her academic training. She did so with great reluctance, but in the process of learning about how to be a president came in contact with other presidents of conventional universities and others directly involved in higher education. Ultimately, she opted to return to higher education, where she has now been president of two public universities.

Summary of Susan

Number of positions: 5

Number of transitions: 3

Sequence of transitions: nfp/pr/nfp/PU

Careerists

These interviewees can overlap with Professionals, but a separate classification here seems warranted since, whether these individuals are professionals or not, their animating impulse seems to be to get ahead.

Will.

Will is a corporate attorney at one of the nation’s largest financial services firms.
Will comes from a family of academics and early on thought that he would pursue an academic career. But the more he progressed through college and learned about the world, the more he came to see that there are a lot of things one can do that, like academics, comprise intellectual activity and problem solving. Also, as time went on, Will developed specific interests in political science, economics, and law. Following college, he worked on Wall Street for several years in investment banking, and was sufficiently successful to be able to finance the law school education that he’d decided needed to come next.

Will distinguished himself in law school and, on graduation, opted to take a position in a state chancery court—that is, the court dealing mostly with business disputes and corporate law. While he was clearly there to learn about the corporate world, a judge he worked for was “incredible,” someone “who really taught me how to think critically about things. And from there I . . . wanted to actually get into public service, because I knew if I didn’t try out public service when I was young and didn’t need as much I might never get back to it, so I did, so I went down to Washington and I worked for a couple of years in the government.”

He enjoyed his government service but knew he would not be in it for a long period. He was concerned by the bureaucracy and came to see his government experience as being instrumental in helping him with his subsequent private sector career:

You look around and realize there are two types of people—there are people that swing in and out relatively quickly, and lifers. And many of the lifers, the criticism with the lifers is that they either had perspective and lost it because they’ve been there so long and so now their perspective is
only the building around them and the government around the building, or they never had perspective because they went in and they stayed there for 20 years or whatever and they never experienced the real world. And so one of my frustrations in being in the government at a young age was that you need some real-world experiences. You need to get out. You need to do real things. And so part of my motive was to get in and understand how the government works, see how it operates, see what’s going on, and then get kicked out into the real world.

After working for several years in a nonprofit setting, at a trade association, Will was hired by the financial services firm where he now works 13 years later.

Summary of Will

Number of positions: 5

Number of transitions: 2

Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/pr

Roscoe.

Roscoe is CEO of a company that provides human services and health care services, generally under contract with state and local government.

Roscoe went to college in the Vietnam era, and his plans to go to law school were derailed by time spent on active duty in the National Guard. After leaving the service, his first position was in a corrections department in state government, working on “some of the first community corrections programs that were developed in the late ’60s and early ’70s.”

He returned to college to study criminal justice, following which he held a series of government positions in criminal justice in both the federal and state governments.
By his early thirties he had reached the level of commissioner in state government, and over 10 years he held two major positions heading state agencies dealing with youth services and mental health. He then transitioned to heading a quasi-governmental entity charged with issuing bonds for colleges and hospitals, a job he held for 6 years.

After a stint as an investment banker for a private firm, he returned to the world of human services, but this time in a series of private sector positions working with government to deliver services.

Roscoe’s moves evidence a series of half-steps away from government: from government to a public authority issuing debt; from a public authority to investment banker; from an investment banker to a private vendor providing services. Reflecting on why he made these moves, Roscoe said:

I have actually thought about it a little bit over time, trying to understand it, and I'm not sure I have a good answer, because one of the conventional answers is money. And certainly in government there are limitations on that. And I think I had an awareness of that, but I don't feel in retrospect that that was the driving factor, although it certainly was a consideration. But I think more than that . . . I had fairly high-level government positions at a very young age, and you, there’s a half-life at that level in government that, not that you couldn’t have stayed longer, but I think if part of what you’re getting out of it is the experience of operating at that level and making policy, it’s a fire hose. You’re drinking from a fire hose at that level, particularly when you’re in your thirties. And there’s an excitement to it, and at some point that begins to diminish. It doesn’t go away, but I really enjoyed those jobs. It was very . . . it’s an exciting kind of work. But over, in my case, a 16-year period, 10 years if you count the commissioner jobs, depending on how you count [the authority] in there . . . it begins to get, I feel badly saying it, it gets old. But the bureaucracy and the limitations and the . . . you find yourself less patient with the constraints that are in the environment.

Summary of Roscoe

Number of positions: 10
Number of transitions: 2

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr

*Jack.*

Jack structures financial transactions in a financial firm.

Jack’s background is similar to that of Gray. He is about Gray’s age, came from a middle class background, and initially chose to enter public service out of a general interest in politics and public affairs. He progressed through a series of increasingly responsible positions in state government, including work on a legislative finance committee and in the office of the governor. He would have preferred to stay in government, but a change in administrations caused him to depart. Like Gray, he was also recruited to Wall Street, where he also built a successful career. Unlike Gray, however, he has few second thoughts about his choice, and does he not think that he would like to leave the private sector.

**Summary of Jack**

Number of positions: 7

Number of transitions: 1

Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/pr/pu

*Betty.*

Betty is vice president for human resources at a large philanthropic entity.

Betty began her career as an English teacher in public schools. When she was promoted to department chair, she dropped her plans for a graduate
degree in English and instead opted to study administration, with a focus on labor relations.

An internship while in school in the labor relations area turned into a full-time position in state government in an innovative program designed to assist state and local governments in the mediation of labor disputes.

Following this position, Betty stayed in human resources but toggled back and forth between sectors several times: from local government to a law firm; from the law firm to a state public authority; from the authority to a financial services firm; and from that firm to two separate positions at nonprofit colleges. Following the last position at a college, Betty accepted her current job heading HR for a large philanthropic organization.

Summary of Betty

Number of positions: 10
Number of transitions: 4
Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu/pr/nfp

Reynard.

Reynard is a partner in a large regional law firm, working on commercial litigation matters, in particular matters dealing with contractors working with the federal government.

Coming out of law school Reynard worked in the Justice Department for several years before leaving to join the firm at which he is now a partner. Reynard’s desire to join the public service initially was not wholly instrumental or
career-based. In fact, he had a fairly strong interest in politics growing up, working on several election campaigns.

His federal work, like his current work, was largely in the area of government contracting. While he liked the idea of his work helping to save taxpayer dollars, “I certainly would not claim that my employment with the federal government was something purely altruistic.” In particular, the justice position allowed him a great deal of trial experience at a young age, something that would be helpful in an inevitable transition to a private sector position.

Such a process was common.

People generally tended to come and work there for 3, 4, 5 years and then leave. Most people did that and then a smaller number stayed, and you might get promoted, but then there were also people who just stayed who were certainly competent attorneys but were never promoted, and I just didn’t want to stick it out that long. When I left I was 43 or so, and I didn’t want to wind up in my late forties or pushing 50 or so to try and go back to the private sector. I thought it would be just very difficult if I stayed beyond that 3- or 4-year point to go back to the private sector. I think if, in certain sorts of positions with the government, if you can acquire some unique experience or get promoted to where you have some credential as far as a senior position that you can then market in the private sector, then it can benefit your career in the private sector to stay for a longer period of time in government. But for what I was doing, I didn’t really see that as beneficial and I didn’t want to get stuck, and I think that when you are trying to move back and forth between government and the private sector it can, there are benefits to, a matter of the time to move and not overstay in either place, depending on what you want to do.

He considered the idea that staying longer might add to his leverage but ruled it out.

I think if you want to continue to do interesting things within government and you have left to go back to the private sector, you can’t stay out of government for too long because unless you are able to go out and raise a bunch of money for somebody who gets to run a presidential campaign or something like that, unless you can somehow leverage whatever you are doing in the private sector into a senior appointed position . . . but those
sorts of spots are hard to come by, or there’s just a lot of chance, and it can take, you can devote huge amounts of time to that. I did some, a little bit of fundraising and issue work on the Obama campaign in 2008, but it became apparent to me quite early on in that effort that there were people who were prepared to spend huge amounts of time doing that and I was still just two years before I started doing that work, it was in the spring of 2007. . . and I just was not prepared to put in the tremendous amount of time I felt would be necessary on the potential chance of chasing some appointment that a thousand other people were chasing as well.

Having ruled out the idea that further federal service would enhance his chances for a senior appointive position, he made his shift to the private sector. He would consider a senior appointive position in the future if circumstances were such that he could make a run at one.

Summary of Reynard

Number of positions: 2
Number of transitions: 1
Sequence of transitions: pu/pr

*Giving Back After a Career*

Roger.

Roger is self-employed in healthcare consulting but for the most part is active on a number of for-profit and not-for-profit boards.

Roger grew up in a family that was highly successful in business and in the community, with parents and other relatives being presidents of companies, community leaders, and elected officials. “And I always thought at some point, I would end up, not being in politics, but I’d end up in government in some way.”
However, after graduation from college, Roger spent more than 20 years developing a highly successful career in the private sector—at one of the country’s leading management consulting firms, as a force behind various start-up technology ventures and in private equity. One private equity venture he joined was headed by two former senior officials in the federal government. That revived Roger’s interest in, and connections to, the political world.

He accepted a position as secretary of economic development in state government. This turned out to be a kind of “super secretary” position in the governor’s cabinet, as about a third of the state government agencies reported to him and Roger reported directly to the governor. As Roger put it, he “had a great time.”

Following the transition of governors, Roger served as CEO and president of two local hospitals, and himself became active in the community through various board memberships and community activities. He is no longer working full-time in the health care area, but continues to be active as a consultant and through board activity.

Summary of Roger

Number of positions: 10

Number of transitions: 3

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu/nfp

Clark.

Clark is senior vice president for finance and administration at a private college.
Clark’s first position, held while he was in college, was in the residence life area of a public university, an experience to which he attributes some of his partiality for “the college type of thing.”

His first position out of college was in the controller’s office of an international consumer products firm, where he gained valuable experience in strategic planning and quantitative analysis. He moved to a financial services firm where, at an early age, he became CFO and COO. From there he held progressively more senior positions in financial services, particularly in investment management.

His first major exposure to something other than a for-profit world came when he moved to a position under the umbrella of a large national nonprofit advocacy organization. The nonprofit owned a financial subsidiary handling retirement funds for its members, and Clark was elevated to president.

Although the entity he headed was in business to make money, it fell under the umbrella of the nonprofit, and to Clark this made for a positive difference compared with his prior experiences. Their approach to providing advice to people was completely different.

Most of what I’d seen [was] “How many calls can you do, how many sales can you close, you’re going to get your bonus based on that,” and it was a very incentive, comp-driven. Whereas [our] approach was much more “You get salary, you get a smaller bonus.” It’s not like out in the private sector. And we’re all about customer satisfaction and really doing a right, the right thing for people . . . you felt good about the work you were doing, not just the fact that you were getting paid for it . . . that was a blast. I had a great time doing it.

Management changes led to a restructuring of the investment management function and Clark found himself, in his early fifties, looking for a
new challenge. He reflected on the research done on life changes at his prior place of employment:

We did tons of research on people who are sort of hitting their fifties, and especially this generation, you get a whole another 20 to 30 years potentially, so you really have the opportunity to start a new career. And I had spent a lot of time on that, and they had also done some interesting studies in how people when they hit their fifties sort of go back to who they were before they had made the money, support the family, and do that kind of thing. And I just thought that was fascinating, so I didn’t want to just jump into the same thing that I’d been doing. I really wanted to do something different and something that I would enjoy. And also, frankly, you know, sort of giving back to people a little bit was definitely something I got out of the experience at [my last job], and it had worked pretty well and you feel good, you like to not only make money and feel like you’ve succeeded, but if you’re doing something that’s helping people, that’s also kind of nice, too.

Clark subsequently opted to move to higher education, to his current job as head of administration and finance for a college.

Summary of Clark

Number of positions: 8

Number of transitions: 2

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/nfp

Finding Oneself

These interviewees only came to a realization of their core identities over time, through the process of professional growth [including setbacks] and individual maturation.

Barry

Barry is dean of a school of public policy at a state university.
Barry’s formative years were in the sixties, and he had an early and avid interest in government and politics. As with many at that time, the Vietnam War colored some of his early choices. After receiving his undergraduate degree, he first opted for law school, partly with a public service career in mind but mostly to avoid the draft. After the elimination of student deferments, he dropped out of law school and entered Vista—again in part for the public service aspect but also in large measure to avoid the draft.

As a Vista volunteer he became very involved with local community organizing and that led him to government—or, more precisely, politics. It was at this time that he made his first forays into campaign work, something he has continued with at more senior levels off and on for most of his career.

After a stint in a for-profit governmentally-oriented think tank, he went to Washington, where he served as the chief of staff to a congressperson from his state. He was then lured back by two good friends who convinced him to become the publisher of a growing alternative newspaper. He took that position, and from there continued through a number of private sector jobs in media, including founding his own successful media company. During this era, though, he was never far from politics. For a number of years he owned but no longer actively managed his company, and from time to time he would become involved in a venture situation or start-up company. This situation allowed for some flexibility to act in a senior capacity on various statewide election campaigns and one presidential campaign.
Somewhat later, he was recruited to come back to government as the chief administration and finance officer for a state government, a very high-level position reporting directly to the governor. He loved the position but still asked himself whether he was fundamentally driven by mission or was rather “a captain of industry or a start-up kind of person.” He came to realize that even in a for-profit setting what attracted him was leadership, that he “didn’t give a sh*t about money,” and that maybe his business skills per se were not all they were cracked up to be.

When an opportunity arose to become dean of a public policy school, he took it, and is quite happy in his current post.

**Summary of Barry**

Number of positions: 9

Number of transitions: 6

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu/pr/pu/pr/pu

Phillip.

Phillip is an assistant professor and director of an academic center at a major state university.

A professional thread runs through Phillip’s career: an interest in human resources. That interest began with an internship while at college and blossomed into a variety of private sector positions for large financial firms. Phillip worked extensively at first in all aspects of recruiting, but his expertise expanded to include management positions in broader HR areas such as global
staffing. He rose as high as senior vice president, overseeing a business group of approximately 10,000 employees.

However, while in financial services, Phillip was always aware that his function was essentially staff. He wasn’t the one making the money for the firm, and his areas were always the most vulnerable during downturns. He reflected on what he liked about his positions and realized that his partiality didn’t run to the financial nature of the firms and their profitability, but rather to making a difference to people in terms of training, consulting, and education.

Several friends were starting up a private firm specializing in outsourced HR, and Phillip became one of the founders. The firm was successful and was eventually bought out, leaving Phillip with some money and with an interest in what should be next.

Reflecting back on his career, Phillip came to realize that what he liked about his positions in banking had little to do with banking but instead with a strong need on his part to understand, to articulate, and to teach. He decided to pursue a doctorate, using the degree to move to the faculty position he now holds.

Summary of Phillip

Number of positions: 3

Number of transitions: 1

Sequence of transitions: pu/nfp/pr/nfp
Joseph.

Joseph founded an annual religious music festival, one that he now manages and promotes.

Joseph went to college in the 1960s, a time that was very formative for him personally and professionally. As a campus activist, he developed a strong interest in public affairs, but also had an interest in writing and was a music major. Following college, he worked as a freelance writer but knew he needed the income of a full-time position. He took a position in public relations at a university in his city. From there he moved through a series of other nonprofit positions until he was offered a position of greater responsibility in the press office for a large state government agency. He held this position until a change of administration led to a political housecleaning. He then moved to the press office of a large public utility, holding that job until management changes there resulted in his departure.

Following the utility position, he has mostly been in the private sector, either self-employed or associated with small public relations firms handling local assignments. More recently, he came to the realization that he could combine his professional skill in writing and PR with his initial love of music by founding and managing an annual music festival, which is ongoing.

Summary of Joseph

Number of positions: 11

Number of transitions: 3

Sequence of transitions: pr/nfp/pu/pr
Arnie.

Arnie is director of a charity providing medical and rehabilitation assistance to individuals who are convalescing in a home environment.

Arnie went directly from an undergraduate degree program to a joint program in law and business. His original goal was to tie together law and business, but not in a traditional for-profit context. Rather, his goal was to use business and law to move into a position as a city manager. But by the time he had finished school, he had opted not to pursue employment as a city manager but to take a position at a law firm. He practiced law in three different firms but did not find a specialty that appealed to him.

Arnie then became aware of a position heading a nonprofit agency in the country of his family’s origin. He took that position and remained overseas for a number of years. Largely for family reasons, he decided to move back to the United States, where he and his wife opened a specialty baking establishment. The business was successful, but Arnie thought 5 years of it enough, and he determined to return to the nonprofit sector. He held several positions of progressively greater responsibility, leading to his current position as director of an agency.

He says he can find a way to connect all of his experiences, though “I recognize that it sounds like I’m lurching wildly back and forth.” While by training he feels he was driven in a for-profit direction and was initially interested in government work, he feels that he is now at home in a nonprofit setting.
Summary of Arnie

Number of positions: 7
Number of transitions: 2
Sequence of transitions: pr/pu/nfp

Quentin.

Quentin is a dean of business at a public university.

Despite coming from a family filled with doctors, Quentin did his academic work in business and economics and early on aimed for a position at the Federal Reserve. He moved, however, to the private sector, and as he did his area of interest shifted from the technical and quantitative to the human side. So began an interest in understanding the labor force and in organizational behavior. He worked at several major financial services firms working on the “softer, people” side, on assessment centers and career planning.

He eventually decided to pursue his doctorate and to enter academia. He worked in three public universities as a faculty member and dean.

Summary of Quentin

Number of positions: 5
Number of transitions: 2
Sequence of transitions: pr/nfp/pu

Kevin.

Kevin is executive director of a consortium of nonprofit entities.

What Kevin “wanted to do his whole life [was] teach.” In fact, he began his career as a public school teacher. Over time, he opted to make a shift into the
ranks of professionals and managers, moving into the nonprofit health field for most of his career. During this period, he continued to find ways to teach as an adjunct at universities. He now heads a consortium of nonprofits aimed at building “professions of practice” across institutional divides.

Kevin’s description of his affective life remains strongly attached to teaching. He says he would have been happy to “give the money back” when employed as an adjunct in university teaching, and there is an aspect of his current job that is heavily oriented toward the educational.

Still, after several years of teaching Kevin also felt the pull of other urges related to ego. He had not earlier in his life visualized himself as someone who could command attention as a leader and manager and, as much as he loved teaching, he began to wonder if he had typecast himself as a low-paid, lower-status explainer. Might he be able to adopt a different persona?

He began to picture himself over time as the CEO of a small hospital, and he reads much of the middle part of his career as building toward that goal. He made one shift into a for-profit aspect of health care before deciding that leading the consortium was the best way to synthesize his love of teaching and education with his desire for a leadership role.

Summary of Kevin

Number of positions: 6

Number of transitions: 1

Sequence of transitions: pu/pr/pu/pr/nfp
Fence Sitters

Harry.

Harry is the head of a national lending unit for an international bank. He is one of two people interviewed who have not switched sectors; however, he has determined that he wants to leave the private sector.

Harry grew up in a large Catholic family, with a strong sense of mission and duty instilled at an early age. His mother was a schoolteacher, and many of his brothers and sisters hold positions that are mission related. Harry, however, has spent his entire career, some 30 years, in business and finance. He has had a successful career in investment banking and project finance lending.

He was hard-driving as a banker but now, in his mid-fifties, wonders whether it makes sense to continue in the fast-paced world of finance, or whether it makes sense to continue in the private sector at all. Recently, he made a final decision to leave the bank at which he works and is now actively seeking a position in a mission-based entity. He has been attracted by government service but is concerned over the bureaucracy. He is leaning toward nonprofit work, but even there he says he would only be interested in working for an entity that "knew what it was doing" and is looking for a way to use his business and finance background to create leverage in the process of "giving back."

Summary of Harry

Number of positions: 5

Number of transitions: 0

Sequence of transitions: pr
Leopold.

Leopold, the other non-sector switcher interviewed, is in some ways Harry’s opposite. He has always been an academic and has held a series of positions with top universities in the area of social entrepreneurship. Unlike Harry, he has no direct private sector experience. Like Harry, however, he is highly interested in business models and in their potential ability to leverage good works in the area of philanthropy.

He speaks of a “revolution” in the philanthropic arena taking place, with charitable entities that had previously disparaged business solutions and approaches now embracing them in new ways. He believes this is due in large part to competitive pressures within the nonprofit arena, as well as the ability of business models to accomplish more and to accomplish it more effectively. He is interested in finding ways of becoming more directly involved with the private sector as regards social entrepreneurship.

Summary of Leopold

Number of positions: 5
Number of transitions: 0
Sequence of transitions: nfp
Chapter Six

Results

Thorough immersion in the narratives and a subsequent coding process yielded a number of emergent themes. These will be discussed in turn in this section. The main themes are as follows:

Service versus Government
Service versus Self-Sacrifice
Service versus Helping
Short Attention Span?
Protean and Boundaryless Careers
Public Service Early or Public Service Late?
Maturation
The Role of the Nonprofit Sector

The first three of these counterpose “service” with a term that might ordinarily be thought of as complementary rather than contrasting. It is easy to consider service as connected directly to partiality to government, a desire for self-sacrifice, or a need to help. But in each instance service could be seen to contrast with, and to be in tension with, these three ideas. The interest in service so often raised in the interviews tended to be an abstract thing, and frictions between the abstract idea of service and the real world were often apparent.
Service versus Government

Sector switchers are a diverse group, and so it should come as no surprise that their attitudes about government and public service are varied. At the outset, it is worth noting that while virtually all of the respondents had experience in public sector work, a smaller number made mention of their attitudes toward government service, the bureaucracy, or public service as an abstract concept. To some extent this reflects the varied motivations of individuals interviewed. As suggested in the previous section, some were driven primarily by career ambition or by a desire to grow professionally, irrespective of sector. Such individuals were less likely to make reference to government and the public sector one way or another relative to attitude.

But when interviewees actually discussed the issue, one striking fact that emerged was the attitudinal distinction between public service as an abstract ideal and government work itself. The former was generally viewed in a highly positive way, but the latter was more often than not viewed negatively.

Of the entire group interviewed, only a small group articulated highly positive feelings about government work as well as the ideal of public service. Paul, Sonja, and Brian each articulated positive views of the ideal of public service (Brian being somewhat more neutral), but all described their positive feelings about the experience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Motivations and Attitudes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Positive about public service . . .&lt;br&gt;I think my spirit is public service. I think that’s, I think that’s part of me, of doing things for greater good. I volunteer a lot, currently for all kinds of different civic organizations. I think that’s a responsibility that all of us have. . . . for me, I like the public sector motivation. It’s just a different, a different thing.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>And positive about government work . . . [the government agency] was a very exciting place. We were doing great things for the public, I thought, and still do. . . . That was a very interesting place, and for me it was something that I saw as doing good for the public . . . So that I think the upper levels of government are, have a lot of amazing things going for them.</td>
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<td>Sonja</td>
<td>Positive about public service . . .&lt;br&gt;I think I felt like [public service] was sort of the altruistic, “I’m doing something to help better enhance people’s lives.” You know, whether it was working with public safety, doing capital projects for, you know, on the budget side, developing, you know, working on economic development projects. I mean they’re visible outcomes of, you know, you’re contributing to the renaissance of a city, and housing, so it gave me a deeper sense of satisfaction.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and positive about government work I really enjoyed my work in [city government]. Most people would say that’s insane. But here I was in an urban environment, the largest city in the state, having sort of a direct impact on policy and being able to influence the public policy. . . I’m not getting the same satisfaction, I don’t think, out of my work as I was then.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>More neutral about public service . . .&lt;br&gt;I definitely focused on environmental studies and then went through my 4 years, you know, assuming I would get some sort of either a science-background or a policy-type job in the environment, and I guess I didn’t really think too much at the time, like, where, but I guess I kind of assumed it would probably in government even, even back then, but if you asked me back then I probably wouldn’t have been able to say either way where I would end up.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And positive about government work It was a great career. I could have stayed there my whole life . . . it was a lot of fun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A larger number of those interviewed agreed with the interviewees above relative to a positive view of public service as an ideal, but they combined this with varying levels of suspicion of, and hostility toward, government work and government as an institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Positive about public service...</th>
<th>I think what really motivates me is the ability to make a difference in our state, with people... [investment banking as a career] just sounded horrible.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>But negative about government</td>
<td>[In this state public authority] we’re not part of the state. We are not state employees... I could never... personally be motivated to run a state department. I’ve been asked over the years to be a commissioner of state agencies. And the inability to control your destiny as a leader, and to make decisions in terms of staffing, in terms of motivation, in terms of, I mean, I think part of the problem of the whole civil service system, for example, to me is it’s limiting... there are a lot of limiting factors on how to do things in a state system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edmund</td>
<td>Positive about public service...</td>
<td>I’m working my rear end off, and it’s worth it. I’ll be, I wish I could do 80 hours a week just in the public sector, but I can’t afford that.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>But negative about government</td>
<td>... As a practical matter, all public employees have appointments for life, with the exception of those high-level employees that come and go as administrations come and go because, particularly those that have union protection, they can only be removed for cause... The primary criterion for making more money in the public sector in [this state] is breathing. If you breathe longer than the next guy, you get paid more money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>Positive about public service...</td>
<td>It was something I’d always been interested in, being a legislator. I got chosen to be state rep for a day when I was in high school and it was an inspiring experience, and that’s what made me get into it in the first place, and when I graduated from college the seat had opened up and I ran for it... I really liked public service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But negative about government</td>
<td>[In the private sector], you can navigate wherever you want to go. You make decisions every day that you sink or swim by, and when you want to do something, you do it. On the other hand, being in public service, it’s totally different. It’s a lot of times, on the law-making end it’s very frustrating because if you’ve got the best idea in the world it usually takes years to get it implemented. I would imagine if you’re an administrator no one wants to take responsibility for anything anywhere in the government. There’s a bureaucratic mindset wherever you are in public service that innovation and risk taking and all the things that make you successful in the private sector are things that get you fired instantly in public service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greta</td>
<td>Positive about public service...</td>
<td>Public service is important, though I have no interest in nonprofits—none.</td>
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<tr>
<td>But negative about government</td>
<td>You can’t really like government to be effective in it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rilla</td>
<td>Positive about public service...</td>
<td>I should say there’s probably another set of drivers, which is that I come from a family that had high ethical [and] moral beliefs and believed in contributing in a positive way to the world, and money was not the biggest driver.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>But negative about government</td>
<td>Call me cynical. Um, uh, the bureaucracy, the entrenchment of the long-term employees that you can’t move out of there, the, uh, political vagaries, you’re in, you’re out if you’re senior enough. Um, the slow pace, the incredibly, ridiculously slow pace of change, um, would just never have appealed to me. The vagaries of funding tax dollars that go up and down, up and down and, um, the lack of strategy, the lack of planning and the corruption. All of that would’ve just—no. Um, I lived in Washington D.C. for several years and my then brother-in-law was, uh, pretty senior in the cardinal White House and some of that stuff looked cool. That’s, you know, the TV show <em>West Wing</em>, that’s that stuff. That’s very cool. What it would’ve taken for me to do that, you know, that was never going to happen. That would never have happened. Um, so when I think about government, no.</td>
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Service versus Self-Sacrifice

Altruism as a concept may seem somewhat intuitive and self-explanatory, but owing to the many human endeavors it touches on it also has an elusive quality when one tries to explain it clearly. Altruism can be, and has been, the topic of a great deal of debate in fields as disparate as moral philosophy (Shaver, 2010), psychology (Greene & Haidt, 2002), economics (Gintis et al., 2005) and evolutionary biology (Trivers, 1971; Hauser, 2008; Ridley, 1997). When we engage in altruism, are we choosing not to regard the self, regarding it in some other way, or doing something else entirely? Should we consider the matter in moral terms, or perhaps as an exchange that humans are prone to enter into for reasons, such as the beneficial effects of reciprocity, that are related to evolution?

As discussed in the literature review section, PSM has tended to stress altruism as a key motivating factor in the public service. Even within the domain of PSM, altruism is a very broad concept, and it can have several somewhat different dimensions, including patriotism, humanitarianism, communitarianism, and duty, but all of its dimensions tend to have a character that is often described as non-self-regarding or as involving self-sacrifice.

These terms may be as difficult to define as their sister term altruism. However, there is a general sense in the literature that it involves some real degree of sublimation or submission of one’s own preferences in favor of some higher good. Roh (2011) defined self-sacrifice as “the willingness to give up tangible recompenses, such as monetary incentives, promotions, and vacation
for the intangible recompenses derived from serving the clients . . . and the possession of a heroic passion for the public.” Indeed, such self-sacrifice among “emotional laborers” such as social workers can cause one to question whether such workers are actually “happy” in their jobs, or whether they sacrifice their own happiness for the greater good (Roh, 2011).

How non-self-regarding are sector switchers? What do we hear when sector switchers address this question?

Here, the answer seems akin to what was heard when sector switchers discussed public service. When listening to sector switchers on public service, we were able to hear a distinction between the attitudes about service in the abstract and about government in the concrete. Something similar seems to be at work as regards altruism and self-sacrifice. Many respondents were able to speak eloquently about wanting to make a contribution in an abstract sense. But when reflecting on what actually motivated them in their jobs, it is hard in many of the interviews to detect attitudes that can fairly be described as non-self-regarding.

That is not to say that there was no evidence for altruism being embraced in both the abstract and the concrete. Several respondents spoke of their long-term commitment to self-sacrifice and the fact that some sort of self-sacrifice was present in their jobs. Recall Jed, who worked hard to come to grips with his “calling,” and who spent time in a private law firm mostly as a way to find out about how the private sector operated, the better to subsequently follow his calling.
Jed  Positive about self-sacrifice as an idea . . .  [Self-sacrifice is] a big part of my decisions, and when I think about even who I talk to as I made these decisions along the way, it’s been the fact that I’ve always been a Christian and that’s been a big part of both my family upbringing and just also the friends that I’ve been surrounded by in many respects. So, when I was in Washington D.C. thinking about these types of issues I was in a, a singles ministry with a lot of close friends who were making similar types of career decisions and we talked a lot about this notion of what does it really mean?

And positive about self-sacrifice on the job  I really felt that it was a time when I . . . of my career when I could do this, make this kind of move. I wasn’t supporting a family or paying a mortgage. I could make it work economically, and it just seemed to me that if I, you know, I really wanted to have that opportunity to find out what it was like to be engaged in that kind of public service . . . And for me it was a, it was a giving back.

Or consider Jon, who felt as though his shift to the nonprofit sector was a kind of conversion experience. It is plain that for Jon the switch worked well both in theory and practice.

Jon  Positive about self-sacrifice as an idea...  It felt like God. It felt like what people say “to be called.” And to be called means that for a moment your free will is subjugated to forces greater than you. My own self-interest, the unknown of a new sector, could be scary. I wasn’t worried about that. No idea what the compensation would be. I wasn’t even thinking about it. What I was thinking about was all of a sudden I almost felt like I needed to be on the other side of the looking glass, and I didn’t know why. I just needed to. I needed to do this. And it was transformative. Because you get pulled through the looking glass and when you’re on the other side, suddenly things that you thought you understood maybe aren’t so true anymore.
And positive about self-sacrifice at work | And they said “Don’t you miss it?” And what they’re implying is, “Don’t you miss that whole world of tech and innovation and the cycle of entrepreneurship?” And I said, “It’s not that I miss it. It’s that I can barely even remember it.” That it was the going through the looking glass.

It was, however, much more common to hear interviewees express attachment to the idea of service but to stress that, far from self-sacrifice, they chose their path as a way to self-actualize, and that most aspects of their job were pleasurable, ego-gratifying, and called for little that could be termed a sacrifice. Indeed, interviewees spoke more about self-actualization and excitement than sacrifice.

| Roscoe | Positive about service or mission as an idea . . . | It’s a little bit of a commonplace to say it, but it’s partly the generation that, the post-Kennedy generation that had a view of public service and government as not being evil, being part of the solution rather than part of the problem. I think many people my age had that sense and so instead of going to business school or places like that, that’s what people did. Even people who went to law school, it was often a public orientation or at least a mission orientation about the criminal justice system or other things.

<p>| But the job is more about self-actualization or excitement than self-sacrifice. | The experience of operating at that level and making policy, it’s a fire hose. You’re drinking from a fire hose at that level, particularly when you’re in your thirties. And there’s an excitement to it . . . I think what that betrays is that maybe the whole thing isn’t quite as altruistic as it seems, in the sense that part of what I got out of being in those governmental positions was a level of excitement, that fire hose sort of thing, at a young age. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raymond</th>
<th>Positive about service or mission as an idea . . .</th>
<th>I do think this duty thing is important in my case. I was raised as a Christian. I was very passionate and idealistic about religion and my reading of Christianity was that it’s a very radical religion. And if you take it literally, it calls you to put worldly things aside and try to do something important in the world and follow an ethical path and love your enemies and embrace the poor and the lepers and the prostitutes and the outcasts.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>But the job is more about self-actualization or excitement than self-sacrifice.</td>
<td>It was always clear to me that I didn’t want to be a martyr. Again, growing up where I did and when I did, there were a lot of people I met along the way who had a Jesus complex. They wanted to die on the cross for something they cared about. And my observation was that those were some of the most dangerous people that you could come across. If you read <em>The True Believer</em>, they were the true believers who could rationalize anything in their minds. They were the ones who become kind of the heart-of-darkness types who thought they were being incredibly self-righteous, who thought they were being self-sacrificing, but might actually be self-aggrandizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lev</td>
<td>Positive about service or mission as an idea . . .</td>
<td>(B)y mission I mean doing something of some transcending value beyond the commercials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>But the job is more about self-actualization or excitement than self-sacrifice.</td>
<td>If I wasn’t paid to market, I can’t do it, ’cause I have responsibility to my family and myself and that’s the way the world works, right? I’m not a volunteer . . . I’m proud of it. I’m proud of it. Don’t tell me it’s all about, oh, non-self-regarding (behavior). That’s not about me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>Positive about service or mission as an idea . . .</td>
<td>I grew up in a family where service and education were important.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>But the job is more about self-actualization or excitement than self-sacrifice.</td>
<td>I don’t think of it as a duty—I really do think this is how I’m satisfying myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>Positive about service or mission as an idea . . .</td>
<td>Everything I've done there's had—there's had to be something good I thought I could do. In government trying to provide housing or better health care, or in government just being more efficient, cost-effective, uh, using taxpayers’ money better, getting them the services they needed, um, investment banking, again, it as public finance, where I felt I was really making a positive difference, making the world a better place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>But the job is more about self-actualization or excitement than self-sacrifice.</td>
<td>That was the type of experience that, to me, it's once in a lifetime and it comes later in a lifetime in a career where I was able to use everything I knew, everything I had done and everything I was. What do people talk about—flow? That's the experience I had at (nonprofit X), you know. I really felt that I was at the top of my game, and it worked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Positive about service or mission as an idea . . .</td>
<td>I think my spirit is public service. I think that's, I think that's part of me, of doing things for greater good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But the job is more about self-actualization or excitement than self-sacrifice.</td>
<td>(The government press office) was a very exciting place. . . . I was at a level where I was part of the management team that got to think about these things on a day to day basis and a lot of the policy decisions came from dealing with reporters’ questions. [They] would call up and say, “Why are you doing this?” And I would check with people and we’d figure out “Why are we doing that?” And it got to be a very intellectually stimulating environment.</td>
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Even Jed, who is described above as embracing altruism in both concept and practice, is highly concerned with finding a way to both make a contribution and gain self-actualization and satisfaction in the process. His discussion of what it means to find a calling suggests very much that he is seeking to consider his career in a way that allows him to actualize fully while still doing good.
Jed's closing statement is a wonderful synthesis, suggesting that, from Jed’s point of view, if you think of the idea of a calling in just the right way, with any luck what you want and what the world wants will be fused into one.

*Service versus Helping*

Another distinction found in the interviews can be made between the idea of service and the practice of helping, particularly if it involves direct and difficult human interactions. As previously discussed, the idea of service was generally viewed positively. The idea of a helping profession, especially if it takes on the character of “emotional labor,” is viewed much more negatively. The very fact that few sector switchers in this sample have had direct experience in a helping profession at all is in itself something of note. But when they did have such

| Jed  | I was in a, a singles ministry with a lot of close friends who were making similar types of career decisions, and we talked a lot about this notion of . . . finding yourself and your true calling . . . That’s the way we often talked about it . . . where to find your passions, your interest, your gifts . . . Just where did that intersect with the needs of the world around you? And that’s really what you were also taught to look for . . . A lot of the conversations I had with other people was, it wasn’t, you know, that the for-profits were good and non . . . excuse me, the for-profits were evil and nonprofits were good or something like that. It was . . . to think about, you know, when you get up every morning are you somehow making a difference in the world using your gifts to the best of your abilities? So I wouldn’t say it was sacrificing, you know, but more the full flowering of who you could be as a professional in the world. Quite the contrary, in some sense it was: use your gifts in a way that really does think about your passions (emphasis added) . . . Now, hopefully, you know, the passions were about not just yourself but about the world around you. |

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experience, they tended in the interviews to downplay it, or to suggest a negative reaction to the experience.

| Veronica | Discussing leaving a job working with difficult children after having been “pretty sure” she wanted to work with kids | I said, “This is not for me, this is just not . . . I’m doing good work, I know. I mean in terms of helping people . . . but this environment, it’s just too much.” |
| Veronica | Discussing the decision to leave another job working with infants in a difficult environment | I worked for a while in, in half time, and they put me in the Infant Toddler Program, again with the babies or kids that were either neglected or potential abuse. A lot of the mothers were adolescent mothers, unmarried with those kids; at that they were zero, you know, just after being born until three years of age, that was one environment in one population where you did really see results other than that it was really slow going. So I started thinking, “I don’t know if this is really how I want to spend the rest of my life.” |
| Paul | Describing his decision to leave teaching to study urban planning | The decision to teach was pretty simple because it was in the days of the draft and the Vietnam War and I didn’t want to go in the army and I found a teaching job that was an occupational deferment. I did it until I was 26 and no longer had to teach for the deferment, but in the meantime I didn’t really enjoy it, it wasn’t what I wanted to do, and it got to be repetitive, because I was teaching fifth and sixth grade year after year and I was just ready to move on. |
| Sara | Discussing going to business school instead of initial choice of psychology | As I was choosing a major in college I thought I wanted to major in psychology, and the rule in our house was our parents would help us pay for undergrad—graduate school, you’re on your own. And so I started researching psych and thought, “I don’t want to commit to a graduate degree yet,” and pretty much, of course, anything I was going to do in psych would require a graduate degree. So |
my dad was a businessman and said, “Get a business degree; it’s a good particle degree,” and was that really what I want to do? Anyway, so I did some more research and stumbled upon what was then called personnel, which was a business degree but had, you know, some of the aspects of psych that I really liked. I didn’t really know what I was getting into, but it sounded good at that time and it actually has turned out to be exactly the right career choice for me, ’cause I would’ve literally gone out of my mind doing therapy all day.

**Sara**

**Discussing getting into HR**

In the last couple of summers just during school I worked at a place called (Center X). It was a summer school/camp for urban junior high students. So I was called a tutor counselor. So I tutored English and lived there with the kids, you know, Monday to Friday, and they wanted me to stay afterwards, and I thought, first of all, it was tough work, it was really tough work, emotionally tough work . . . I sort of loved the thought of it, but being the trenches with, you know, with the kids who get rough lives . . . and you know, I think I need to try this HR thing. I had the potential to burn out since my boundaries were just not that good.

**Foster**

**Viewing his teaching experience before the private sector as not consequential**

We’ll set aside the early days. The teaching. You know what a teaching job is all about.

**Joanne**

**Discussing why she rejected a teaching career**

I initially went to college to be a math teacher and after about three semesters in calculus and differential equations I said, “Where’s the numbers?” The numbers is what I like.

**Betty**

**Discussing why she moved up from, and left, teaching in the classroom**

And I taught school for seven years and went on to do—I had been working on a master’s degree in English. I was promoted to department chair and I realized that the degree in English was not going to help me. I really needed accounting, budget planning, project management, et cetera.
| Melinda | Discussing her desire to move into higher-level editorial and writing work | When I was growing up in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in Philadelphia, all the boys were going to be doctors and lawyers and the girls were supposed to be elementary school teachers to support their husbands through law school or medical school and then retire and raise a family and have a nice life. And whatever it was, I knew that that wasn’t for me. |
| Greta | Reflecting back on her public service career | I think I realized late in life that I really didn’t like people and that I preferred paper. |
| Raymond | Discussing a path he rejected | And I was thinking of starting a charter school. A charter high school. Kind of getting back to my high school teaching. Because I’d always been, when I taught, I had some strong ideas about how I would run a school if I ever created one. . . . And I thought, well, [my company] started two charter schools, and we ran them, but I didn’t have to deal with the angry parent calling in the middle of the night, and when you start a school, you’re down in the weeds. |
| Raymond | Discussing leaving international assistance | So we did that, but honestly, by then, this is like the fifth year of international development. Our observation was that almost everyone who did that work was either divorced, an alcoholic, or cynical. It took a toll on people, going from one Third World capital to the next, kids in private schools in Switzerland or Italy someplace, living this contradictory life where in some ways you are living almost like a billionaire would do in this country relative to ordinary people, but you are seeing this horrendous stuff every day. It’s really hard work and emotionally takes a toll, and I think it’s hard on families. So we said, “I’m not sure we want to make that our career.” |

*Short Attention Span?*

A thread running through many of the interviews could be described as “short attention span” but could be captured in any number of ways. Some interviewees, partly in jest, spoke of having Attention Deficit Disorder. Others
worried about getting bored too easily. Others counted variety as one of the
critical attractors in an employment situation. While related to the desire for a
new challenge, which is also a common thread among sector switchers, this
theme is something different, as it is not simply about the pull of new challenges
but also the push of potential boredom or an inability to enjoy repetitive tasks.

Penelope | I couldn’t be a faculty member that would teach the same thing
over and over again. After I did it a couple times, I have a sense
that I would get bored with it—that I just couldn’t repeat myself. It’s
kind of like when the architects want to do preps for interviews, and
they want to go over and over it again—that just annoys the heck
out of me, because it’s like, “I’m done.”

Raymond | For a person with Attention Deficit Disorder, a college presidency is
a fantastic job. Because you can’t get bored. I don’t think I am
(ADD). But if there’s a spectrum, I’m closer to that end. And I think
that that’s part of the beauty of the job, though, is that I get to be a
little bit of a dilettante. I can go to our investment committee
meetings with some of the most brilliant hedge fund managers in
the world and hear them talk about investment strategy and hold
my own. I don’t really know everything that they are talking about,
but I can ask questions and I think sometimes I actually play a
useful service. And then I can go to a meeting and a bunch of
academics talking about how we want to teach improvisation. And
I can go to a student affairs meeting, what kind of peer advising is
the best approach, and how do you mount a campaign to help
students take the peer pressure off for drug and alcohol abuse.
And then you go raise money, and you meet all these interesting,
eccentric people who, if you’re lucky, part with some share of their
wealth. So my X job was nice, relatively diverse, because again,
you could be in a classroom with two-year olds and you could be at
an investor conference. But it was kind of polar. Two dimensions.
This is three or four dimensions of variation.

Grant | I mean, what’s exciting and energizing about higher education is
that you’re constantly given and expected to move into new areas
of pursuit. In fact, I’ve always joked that one of the issues with
educators is that today’s idea is always the best idea, and so they
can’t stay focused on completing the task that they were working
on last week because they’re constantly excited by the newness,
and that’s what I like. I like the fact that when I come in the office
every day I can say, “You know what? Let’s do something with the
Ukrainian universities because there’s a real twist with what’s going
on with Ukraine in Germany,” and so you’re given this license to
completely explore. So that’s very exciting.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Phillip</th>
<th>And when I really think back to those days, I never really quite knew which path I wanted to go on. And I had an interest in so many different things. . . When I was in college, I was a psychology major, I did start out in philosophy, and then I moved to business—I was all over the place.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>When I start to feel that I know how to do what I’m doing, then it’s definitely time to move on, and I’ve done that.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Well, I get bored, which may be evidenced by the career changes that I’ve made. I don’t know. But I, after I do something for a while, when it becomes . . . after I do something for a while it becomes just routine to me and I’m looking for something else. I guess I’m that type of person. I’m always looking to learn something different, new challenge, some sort of new, I mean, there’s a lot of stuff going on. This actually, here at the foundation, is the longest I’ve ever been anywhere. And I’ve actually said it a few times out loud recently. I was like, ‘This is the longest I’ve worked anywhere.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sonya</td>
<td>I have to constantly learn. I just would go out of my mind if I didn’t.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>I didn’t really enjoy [teaching], but it wasn’t what I wanted to do, and it got to be repetitive, because I was teaching fifth and sixth grade year after year and I was just ready to move on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>It’s one of the things I loved about working at [X] . . . It was very varied. That appealed to me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lev</td>
<td>I never think of anything else I have done as having a job. I think of it as being on a project.</td>
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**Protean and Boundaryless Careers**

As discussed in the Literature Review section, the literature on careers has highlighted a shift from other-directed employment expectations to more self-directed ones. Boundaryless careers are defined by a view of organizations that is fluid, with participants less oriented to hierarchy and more able and willing to move into other turf if that is what it takes to get the job accomplished. Some of
that was in evidence here, as in the comments of Roger, discussing how he managed effectively as a super-secretary in state government.

| Roger     | So I took all those patterns of behavior . . . so much came out of consulting, where you’re not actually running something. So I took a lot of that function to, um, uh, in the government, and I realized one of the reasons that people who have a traditional or what we’ll call a hierarchical private sector career—the classic example of course is Paul O’Neil, uh, who worked his way up and became CEO of a company and then to be Bush’s first treasury secretary. He had no concept of managing laterally. The fact that is that, um, all these other people, legislators, chiefs of staff, 26- or 28-year-old deputy chiefs of staff, mattered a lot. |

But protean careers are on greater display in the interviews than boundaryless ones. Many of the participants placed themselves in the center of the drama that constituted their professional life, reinventing themselves multiple times. Rudy has moved fluidly from sector to sector and back again as he has changed his entire professional approach. Price recalls his father’s advice that the only thing that matters is whether something is meaningful to you. Lev considers jobs “projects” and reinvents himself on completing each in turn. Probably the best single statement that exemplifies the protean approach comes from Melinda, who has held 11 positions and has made 7 sectoral transitions. When asked what she does currently for a living, Melinda declined to answer by naming a job but instead responded with a personal self-description:

| Melinda | I fix things. |
**Public Service Early or Public Service Late?**

A broad distinction can be made between those individuals who started out in public service (or otherwise did public service early in their career) and those who came to it later. Motivations for each approach are varied.

**Chance**

Among those who did public service early, there is an element of chance and opportunism. That seems inevitable given that people starting a career have little traction or experience, that they are likely not to be fully mature, and that they are not yet anywhere near being the masters of their fate.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>I took the job because I needed a job.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>I graduated from college in 1967, which was the ramp-up period of Vietnam War, and I was motivated as much as anything else by not wanting to go to Vietnam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>The decision to teach was pretty simple because it was in the days of the draft and the Vietnam War, and I didn’t want to go in the Army and I found a teaching job that was an occupational deferment.</td>
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**Getting Higher-level Experience Early**

But others gravitated to, or were held by, public work early on because of the excitement it brought, and the fact that if you were talented you might be given more than your share of responsibility quickly.
Roscoe  | [I] got appointed commissioner [of X] in 1979. I was 32 years old and didn’t know what I was doing. . . . I had fairly high-level government positions at a very young age, and part of what you’re getting out of it is the experience of operating at that level and making policy, it’s a fire hose. You’re drinking from a fire hose at that level, particularly when you’re in your thirties. And there’s an excitement to it.

Jed  | One of the nice things about being there, as a fairly young attorney, was the opportunity to develop national policies and really make a difference at a national level in a very different way than, I think, had I stayed at the law firm or had been in some other type of job early on, because, agencies like this, they’re always shorthanded, they’re always . . . the funding is always short, so if they’ve got the people that are ready and willing to do the work and take initiative, there’s actually quite a bit that you can accomplish.

Reynard  | It was certainly fun, I mean, nerve-wracking and exhausting, but also a lot of fun to be in court much more than I’d had the opportunity to do even once I’d become a partner in a large law firm. . . Even though Department [X] has thousands of attorneys, there are only certain cases that are large enough to be staffed by more than one lawyer, and particularly in our office every lawyer had several dozen cases, and I was the only lawyer in each of my cases and was often up against multiple lawyers from large well-funded private law firms.

Grant  | . . . So when I received my doctoral research, it was to go to [country X]. I received two fellowships and the Minister of Planning said to me, “Do your dissertation in the evening and work for me on [the nation’s] economic development plan.” So it was a fabulous opportunity. Basically my research was helping him write the fifth plan of the nation.

Melinda  | [The early public sector job was] really the pivotal one in my career . . . that’s where I really figured out that what I like to do is fix things, get things done and make things better. And I also really learned there, um, politics with a big P and with a small p . . . I learned how to figure out where people are coming from, you know, really the whole approach to getting things done.

It is of interest to note how Melinda, as a protean character, values her early public sector experience in terms of how it helped her develop the skills and
mindset (“fixing things”) that she then used in any number of other sector settings.

Public Sector as Means Rather than End

Of course, as has been discussed previously, for the careerists and the professionals there is a clearly instrumental character as well to early career public sector experience. Reynard summarizes this view:

| Reynard | It was a combination of both desire for public service and just the opportunity to get more trial experience that took me to the Department of [X], so I certainly could not claim or would not claim that my employment with the federal government was something purely altruistic . . . I thought it would be just very difficult if I stayed beyond that 3- or 4-year point to go back to the private sector. I think . . . in certain sorts of positions with the government, if you can acquire some unique experience or get promoted to where you have some credential as far as a senior position, that you can then market in the private sector. |

What about those who come to the public sector later in life? The first thing to be remarked on relative to the individuals interviewed is that this path is relatively rare. Some came to the public sector after the private sector, but (as with Jed) after only a brief flirtation with the private sector aimed at making money or getting relevant experience. And it was quite common for individuals to come later in life to the nonprofit sector, as we will discuss in more detail below. There were only 3 interviewees of whom it could fairly be said that they came to the public sector only after significant experience in other sectors.
Transient High-level Appointments

One of these individuals, Roger, fits the mold of the successful businessman recruited by an elected official to a high-level transient appointment. That is, only 1 of 50 was similar to the individuals portrayed as transients in the federal system in Mackenzie’s *The In-and-Outers*.

In Roger’s account of his public experience, one can sense both an initial wariness about joining up as well as recognition of the potential rewards of a high-level government position.

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<tr>
<th>Roger</th>
<th>But it seemed intriguing, um, slow time in the public, in the private equity markets so I said, “Sure, I’ll at least talk to them.” One of Governor [X]’s best friends called me up . . . So I did that interview with her, met a few other people in the cabinet, thought it was a really strong team and an interesting, uh, interesting opportunity and a big opportunity. And then a week later I was meeting with the Governor and he offered me the job, which was quite nice. And I thought about it for a day or two and just figured I was not going to get another opportunity this interesting for quite a while so I, um, uh, took it . . . Well, I said to my wife something along the lines of “I don’t know if I’ll get another opportunity like this again,” so it was taken . . . Had a great time.</th>
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“Management is Management.”

The other two individuals who came to public service late in life were not lured out of a high-paying finance career by the prospect of a senior government slot. Rather, they were both individuals who had significant experience in aspects of private and nonprofit management that they brought to public sector management without much thought of the sector switch. Chuck came to town government management after a long career in technology and telephony.
Sidney came to county government management after a long career in small business, health care and law. Both were categorized in the preceding section as having "low public service motivation" and both use strikingly similar language when describing sector differences and the motivations they felt in making a sectoral shift.

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<tr>
<th>Chuck</th>
<th>Management is management. If you’re a good manager you can function at a high level in virtually anything you do, in the public sector as well as the private sector. Government administration is a regulated service business, and if you take care of your taxpayers and constituents just as you take care of your customers, in the end things will work out. So operational management skills transcend the boundaries of the sector, and at the end of the day you’re managing people, process, and technology.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>All through this, whether I was doing a pig roast at an airport, running a cleaning crew, practicing law, or doing government stuff, I am applying the same skill set. I am working with people on customer service, I am facilitating, I am mediating, I am educating, I am advocating . . . [In terms of taking a government job] I clearly did not make any sort of reasoned decision that said, “Gee, I really need to serve the people.”</td>
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Maturation

Related in some ways to the above question of early versus late is the question of maturation. The literature of public service motivation has drawn extensively from the literature of psychology, especially the literature dealing directly with such things as intrinsic motivation.¹ But psychological questions of maturation along the lines discussed by Erikson are generally absent. Yet as Erikson and others have shown, people do change significantly over a lifetime,

¹ See, for example, references to Deci’s work in intrinsic motivation in Crewson (1997) and Perry (2000).
with certain phases and cycles apparent, and this will doubtless have some relevance to the question at hand about public service motivation and to the broader desire to serve.

Youthful idealism is much remarked on as a phenomenon, and it was definitely the case that in this sample it was also on display. Interviewees often talked about lessons learned from family that influenced early career decisions, the effects of the counterculture on thinking about careers that started in the early 1970s, and about starting out in life wanting to make a difference. But the theme of maturation—of only coming later in life to what really mattered most—is also present in these interviews.

Joe was a music major in college who left music behind for more lucrative endeavors after he graduated. He also underwent a religious conversion as an adult, which proved to be a major event in his life. It was only when he reached his early sixties that he quite suddenly came to see how he could combine his neglected love for music with his new religion by creating and managing a religious music festival.

Barry moved between public service and a desire to be a “captain of industry” and only came later in life to a fuller realization of the underlying desire for leadership that undergirded both impulses.

Phillip spent many years in the financial services industry, where the dominant side is “hard” finance, on the recessive people side of the business. It took him a long time before he came to see that he was at heart not a financier
but an educator, and only then did he take steps to serve in a way more to his liking.

Jon remarked that “I couldn’t do what I am doing now when I was in my twenties.”

_The Public Sector’s Existential Side_

T. Lucas Hollar (2008) recently argued in an award-winning NASPAA dissertation that public administration may have neglected an inherently existential side, a way of being that arises directly from the many uncertainties and ambiguities associated with public sector decisions and organizational dynamics. The nature of the interview process was such that I chose not to impose this potential code on respondents. However, listening for such dynamics was part of the reviews of the interviews.

Few respondents discussed this aspect of their career shifts, neither raising existential issues nor expressing a feeling one way or another about them. When respondents held higher-level positions where such value ambiguities might be more likely to be present, they tended to use language such as “exciting” or “a blast” or “had a great time,” at least on the face of it not expressing much by way of dealing with existential struggles.

Michelle comes close to expressing something along these lines but does not address the question directly.

| Michelle | For me, I have always been a person that the more complicated it is, the better, you know, like, “This is a mess,” and it’s like, “Put me in! Put me in! Mess, I’m so excited! Yes, that would be me.” |


Only Barry, the former congressional chief of staff and former administration and finance secretary to a governor, hits the question directly, and he does so in a clear and articulate way. This is Barry speaking of public service in comparison with working in the private sector:

| Barry                        | It’s almost like it [public service] was freer . . . you could be corrupt if you chose to, but it provided a freer terrain in which you could express the values and do value-oriented things as opposed to [the private sector] . . . When you’re accountable for such a narrow measurement stick [as in the private sector], it eliminates all the other goods, you know, there’s only one good and there becomes tremendous pressure to accomplish that good and to me that was a corrupting and unlimited influence. . . [Also], I think in the not for-profit public sector winning and taking gratification from winning is much harder. I mean, the model, the paragon of the opposite of that is sports. I mean, that’s, man, you get out there, you hit the ball, you win, you’re ahead, it’s over, you win, and there’s just nothing like that experience of winning and winning is black and white, you either win or you lose and there’s no question about it. Similarly, to a very large extent in the business world, you know, the size of your bonus, you know, whether you make your numbers, you know, whether you did get the sale, there’s a much more tangible measure of success and winning, and winning is a gratifying experience, particularly from being a boy. You grow up in sports, you know, where winning is what it’s about. |

Barry, at least, seems to clearly relate to the kind of existential questions that Hollar refers to, and in fact to value his opportunity to play in the public sector’s “freer” terrain.

The Role of the Nonprofit Sector

One of the most intriguing aspects of the interviews, and one deserving of future study, is the relationship between the nonprofit and public sectors where
the idea of service is concerned. But once again, this raises the issue of what people mean when they talk about service.

The PSM literature tends to focus on measuring partiality to government per se, only then acknowledging that such sentiments can be set against a backdrop of a more general desire for service. These interviews seemed to bring the question of service as a general impulse more to the foreground, and tended not to moor this impulse in a given sector, task, or profession. It was this abstract notion of service that occupied the foreground in the interviews, with the purely public aspect of service apparent more in the background, occasionally coming to the foreground but more often not.

Because the need to serve that people spoke so often about was for the most part an abstract thing, it was capable of being shaped in any number of directions. More to the immediate point, among sector switchers (or at least among the interviewees in this sample), when service was shaped by the demands of life in a specific direction, it more often than not moved in the direction of nonprofits rather than government. As we have seen, while most interviewees had public sector experience, when movement is detected from the private sector to jobs oriented toward service, the movement tends to be from the private sector to nonprofits rather than from the private sector to government.

There are numerous instances of interviewees, having once worked in government, going on to the nonprofit sector: Betty, who moved in HR from government to an international charity; Sonja, who left government for education; Melinda, who found her initial government position so useful but spent most of
her career in nonprofits; and Rudy, who went back and forth between sectors but in the end left government for a nonprofit. And there are other instances of shifting directly from the private sector to the nonprofit sector: Jon, whose nighttime conversion experience brought him out of a successful private sector career to heading a major international NGO; Price and Raymond, who both left successful private sector careers for private college presidencies; and Richard, who left commercial banking for private higher education and a community foundation. Each of these individuals could have opted for public experience, but they did not.

By contrast, we see only three instances of individuals making the shift into government later in life. And as we saw in the earlier discussion, none of these could fairly be described as having been motivated in large part by service, idealism, or a desire to give back. Roger, the financier, saw slowness in the equity markets at the time he was sounded out for a super-secretary position, and came to realize that a really big government job could be a really big deal. Chuck and Sidney see no large difference between managing in one sector or another, and neither professes to be greatly interested in serving the people as an ideal.

If indeed the nonprofit sector is creating a greater pull in this current era, it would be a good thing to understand why.
Chapter Seven

Research Limitations

This study has been an exploratory one in line with the statement that opened it: “Not much is known about the motivations of sector switchers.” As Babbie (2010) has pointed out, exploratory research can be valuable in the social sciences and can be essential when new ground is being broken. Here, there is new ground in at least two respects. First, very little has been written in the academic literature about sector switching. And second, while the literature of public service motivation, which has a direct bearing on the research question, is well developed in terms of theory, the holistic aspect to it that has recently been called for is not well developed. For both reasons an exploratory study is justified.

However, Babbie also writes that exploratory studies in and of themselves are unlikely to provide definitive answers for several reasons, including the probable nonrepresentativeness of the sample. That is clearly the case here. While a robust number of in-depth interviews were conducted and while this researcher believes that, given the themes developed, theoretical saturation was reached, the sample used was not a random one. Snowballing is purposive and not random, and its results will vary depending on the vagaries of the first ball of snow and the direction the snowball takes as it rolls down the hill.
The nature of the sample is not the only hazard creating limitations in connection with qualitative work. This study relied on interviews, and this approach brings inherent risks, including concerns over the trustworthiness of interviewees’ responses as well as whether the researcher correctly heard and understood respondents’ interpretation of events. Qualitative researchers will for this reason sometimes choose to triangulate interview responses with other written or oral sources. Bowen (2005) discussed his own research, in which his core interviews were supplemented by other sources in order to determine the veracity of interviewee responses.

My conclusion was that this approach would not be helpful in connection with the topic of sector switchers. The facts of respondent’s accounts—where they had worked previously—could in theory be checked. But whereas with some research topics checking the facts of the accounts might make a large difference in terms of the reliability of the accounts, here fact checking seemed not to be germane. There seemed to be no real reason why interviewees, many of whom were quite senior in their professions, would alter their backgrounds in a significant way for these interviews.

Of course, respondents didn’t just provide facts but also sought to interpret their experiences, and here it might well be the case that an account might be overly self-serving or otherwise less than fully trustworthy. Particularly with very senior individuals, there can be a risk of a scripted situation, one in which the respondent has a public persona and might feel a need to deliver a scripted story. Here, though, triangulation by means of review of other written or oral
materials did not seem feasible. There seemed no ready way to triangulate respondent's interpretations. My conclusion was that my best course of action would be to stress the confidentiality and anonymity of responses. I also sought in my demeanor to establish rapports with the respondents, the better to defuse instances of scripting.

A separate issue that creates a limitation is the question of whether the researcher properly understood the interview. Perhaps the interviewee misspoke; perhaps the researcher misunderstood, or injected his or her bias into an understanding of what the interviewee was trying to say. Here, Bowen (2005) suggested that member checking can be helpful. Member checking involves a follow-up with interviewees to help determine whether the researcher's understanding is in line with respondent intent. By contrast with triangulation, member checking seemed both feasible and useful, and respondents were provided with the profiles written about them included above in the Data section. Responses received from interviewees were positive.
Chapter Eight
Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

As the above section describes, definitive conclusions in an exploratory study are not likely. Further, this dissertation is an exercise in phenomenology. While I hope some of the insights and themes developed might be helpful in further framing inductively-oriented theoretical perspectives, the tentative conclusions presented here will therefore not take the shape of grounded theory.

The tentative conclusions reached here follow.

Weak PSM?

As we have seen, this sample is characterized by strong expressions of a general desire to serve, but this tends not to translate into a long-term commitment to the public service. When sector switchers leave government, they tend not to come back. When they move to a non-private sector position from the private sector, it tends to be to the nonprofit area rather than government. Only three individuals came to the public sector late in their careers and, in their cases, little or no altruistic motivation can be discerned.

Given its quantitative orientation, the PSM literature conceptualizes PSM as something that can be measured and of which an individual can have more or less. It may be that sector switchers simply have less of it. This dissertation dealt with sector switchers only. Further research may try to establish whether
sector switchers are different from government workers according to the measurement schemes advanced in the PSM literature.

*Idealism as a Coping Strategy*

Tied to this question is the question of why sector switchers may in fact have less by way of public sector motivation. Some of the answer may be found in a closer examination of what functional role PSM plays in the lives of the people who seem to have it. Vinzant (1998) studied the extraordinarily difficult job that child protective workers are called upon to perform. The job is filled with difficult emotional, moral, and human elements—exactly the kind of job that the sector switchers interviewed here would not find to their liking. Vinzant’s conclusion was that PSM acts, in effect, as a coping mechanism:

Public service motivation appeared to at least partially outweigh the problems and demands of a job that most people say they could never do. Moreover, strong public service motivation may play a role in helping workers successfully cope with value and role conflicts.

It may be the case that while PSM can be viewed as a set of abstract ideas from an academic perspective, its function in the daily life of some government workers in some instances is to act as a kind of salve (in this regard, recall Sara’s comment to the effect that difficult human resource decisions were easier for her in a mission-based organization because, in effect, they became easier to rationalize).

If this is the case, it would not be surprising to see higher PSM among child protective workers (who, in effect, need it) and lower PSM among the sector switchers in this sample (who appear not to). As we have seen, the sector switchers in this study tend to be self-actualizers more than self-sacrificers and
may have less of a need for a kind of belief system that helps to support them. They don’t have to deal with a job “they could never do” because most of them sought out their jobs for the very satisfactions they bring.

*Is Government Welcoming to Protean Characters?*

While sector switchers as defined most often have government experience, they tend to leave government, or pass through it, as opposed to making it a central or capstone element of their careers. Why is that? One study (MacDonald, 2005) suggests that, at least in Australia, traditional career paths have not given way to protean ones. Either protean career switchers have a fundamental disinterest in government or government has not made itself a hospitable abode for sector switchers. Given how driven and talented many of the individuals interviewed are, it makes sense to understand this dynamic better, the better to secure the talents of these individuals.

*Desire to Serve in Tension with Other Prosocial Values*

What people believe in the abstract can be very different from what they come to believe as they live their lives. There seemed to be a strong sense from the interviews that an expressed desire to serve happily coexists with such seemingly opposing factors as disdain for government, a desire for self-actualization, and a seeming aversion to the helping professions.

Relative to the tension between service and government, Rosabeth Moss Kanter recently wrote that “while mistrusting government—or, it seems, all large, established institutions—Americans trust their own capacity as individuals to take action” (Kanter, 2005, p. 10). This tension has relevance to the interplay
between government and the nonprofit sector, to be discussed below. Public service motivation theory may benefit from a closer exploration of these tensions.

**Service to the Public Sector versus Service to the Nonprofit Sector**

In this sample, there is no general pattern of either moving from the private sector to the public/nonprofit sectors or the reverse. People go both ways, and for different reasons. Chance plays a role, especially in the early part of a career. Further, people’s motivations are varied, and, as we have seen, include the desires for greater compensation, high status, prestige, an opportunity to serve, a new challenge, and variety. Depending on these specifics, individuals will sometimes move to the private sector and sometimes from it.

There is one pattern, however, that can be discerned: a movement over time from government to the nonprofit sector. Each story is different, but the effect of all the moves together shows, in effect, a net emigration from the public sector and a net immigration to the nonprofit sector. As sector switchers move from the private sector to positions where they can tap into their professed desire to serve, they tend disproportionately to favor the nonprofit sector rather than government.

Government was not valued highly in this sample of sector switchers. Moreover, while this negativity was often expressed by the minority of respondents (like Raymond and Rilla) who had had no experience in government, it was also expressed quite often by individuals (like Sam and Foster) who had had direct experience of the bureaucracy, with that experience
being a significant reason for a subsequent departure to the nonprofit sector. The relative few who spoke highly of government tended to be high enough up in it to experience something of what Roscoe called the “fire hose.” But the excitement expressed by respondents is itself not unalloyed. Greta hearkened back to the “fire hose” notion by referring to certain of her public experiences as “a blast.” But she also concluded somewhat dourly that “you can't really like government to be effective in it.”

As the above may indicate, some of net migration may be due to the push of bureaucracy and the negative feelings that produces in sector switchers. If nothing else, government appears to have a public relations problem, and sector switchers are not immune from its effects. But there may also be a pull element as well. That is, some of the interview material suggests that the nonprofit sector’s intrinsic motivational pull may be greater than that of government, beyond the concerns expressed over a bureaucratized workplace.

As an example, consider Gray, the investment banker who started in municipal and federal government but who went on to a successful career as a public finance investment banker. He was one of the few who professed an interest in a later-in-life return to the public sector, but his experience with the vetting process brought home to him some of the inexorable downsides to public employment, even at a high level. When he talks now about wanting to make a shift in his life and to give back, he no longer discusses the abstract ideal of public service. Instead, he says he would like to focus on a specific issue about which he has become passionate—in his case, finding a way to teach children
basic concepts of financial literacy. This is a shift from an abstract ideal to a specific one moored in one’s life experience.

The idea that the “desire to give” would prioritize the specific over the general is not a new one, or unique to careers. Its closest parallel can be found in the world of philanthropy. The process of giving money via philanthropy has obvious similarities with the process of giving back via a service-oriented job. Performing a job that is service oriented is a way to give back with one’s labors in the same way that philanthropy is a way to give back with resources. Motivational lessons from the philanthropic realm may therefore have resonance to the question of careers.

One of the shifts that has been much remarked upon in the area of philanthropy is the rise of the assertive donor interested in using his or her gifts to accomplish specific objectives of interest. Development officers at universities, for instance, are quick to point out that the days of giving to old Alma Mater out of a general, abstract love of the institution are over. In the current era, donors tend to see the institutions they give money to not as the final recipients but as vehicles for accomplishing what they want to do.

*The Chronicle of Philanthropy* recently noted this trend. With reference to the cohort significantly represented in this study, the *Chronicle* pointed out that “the boomers are a fussy bunch, and charities need to learn how to accommodate them. They want positions where they can make a difference.” The article went on to point out efforts being undertaken across the nation to find ways of tailoring program structure to specific donative desires and skill sets.
As a successful development officer recently remarked, it is “the ability to be part of the solution with your boots on the ground and your bank account at the ready that the civic service elite are looking for” (Melton, 2011; italics in the original).

If we were to analogize to careers, this shift in philanthropy may be part of a larger cultural shift that tends to benefit the nonprofit sector over government in the eyes of potential “donors” of their labor. Not only do nonprofits tend to come with fewer built-in bureaucratic controls and rigidities, they also tend to be designed for very specific purposes that can have a targeted appeal to those wishing to give back.

A recent study by the MetLife Foundation and Civic Ventures (2005) made the argument that people in the middle or near the end of their careers represent a large untapped resource for public service. And yet it is interesting that when one reviews the report itself, there is little to no mention of government as a direct beneficiary of those labors. Government is lauded as a vehicle for collective action, and programs are proposed that might stimulate and support integrating talents and needs. But by and large, the actual public service that is referred to in the report is comprised of nonprofit, rather than government, activity, with government being viewed as a facilitator of that effort.

This is another area where further research is needed. Are there ways in which government can be more open institutionally to sector switchers? And are there ways in which government can refashion how it describes its services so
that those interested in addressing specific needs can more readily find purchase in a public setting?

**PSM's Prescriptive Side**

One of the themes developed in the literature review deals with PSM's prescriptive side. Understood descriptively, PSM research is about locating various attributes, typically related in one way or another to altruism, and measuring what they affect and what affects them. But what about PSM when understood prescriptively?

An argument was developed earlier that PSM had consciously set itself up as a defender of more traditional public administration values as opposed to newer public-choice and market-driven values. Looked at in this way, there is a “should” element to PSM in which positive benefits are held to flow from a view of government workers as possessing altruistic impulses. In fact, as noted earlier, Perry explicitly expressed concern about articulating self-interest because such articulations “risk becoming cast in stone in our public institutions, ensuring a self-fulfilling prophecy” (2010, p. 679)

But all social ideas with an instrumental intent can be double-edged swords. Nothing is virtuous in the abstract—everything must be scrutinized as to its effects, with such effects varying at different times and under different circumstances. The language that people use today to express support for unions can be quite similar to the language used a century ago. But even if the language is the same the meanings will be different, as will the practical effects, owing to different historical circumstances.
Will it always be the case that stressing the altruism of government workers will have positive effects? What if reinforcing the altruism of the government sector has the effect of ideologically supporting the interests of government? Some commentators skeptical of government in fact take this view, arguing that the last thing one would want to do is remind government workers of their virtue because “actually, government is not sufficiently demoralized. The hubris that is the occupational hazard and defining trait of the political class continues to cause government to overpromise and underperform” (Will, 2011).

There is more than a bit of routine conservative cant in that argument, but from a scientific point of view there may be something to it. Returning to the theme of evolution and cognitive structures, psychologists have recently analyzed a phenomenon they call “moral licensing.” The gist of this research is not to ask “what is moral?” but to examine clinically what people actually do when they think and behave with an eye toward moral issues (Mazar, 2010; Merritt, 2010; Greene, 2002). Under this view, morality is not just a code. It is part of a dynamic human enterprise, and sets off its own effects when it is activated.

Research indicates that under certain circumstances the introduction of morality will inhibit bad behavior, as one would hope. But in other cases, it can have the effect of “freeing us to be bad” (Merritt, 2010).

Moral self-licensing can thus be located within a broader class of phenomena in which personal characteristics and behavior can either give people license to act on their motivations or constrain them from doing so. Research has examined how moral self-licensing can disinhibit selfish behavior. Our framework suggests that when individuals have had a chance to establish their kindness, generosity, or compassion, they should worry less about engaging in behaviors that might appear to violate prosocial norms. (Merritt et al., 2010, p. 355).
Contra Perry’s concern over self-fulfilling prophecies, it was argued earlier in this study that a public service model stressing non-self-interested action was hardly at odds with a Madisonian view of government, one stressing the foibles, weaknesses, and self-interests of people and factions. And in fact, morality may do a better job of inhibiting when people consider themselves to be less saintly rather than more so. That is, reminding people to be wise, just, and compassionate may prove a worthwhile endeavor less because that is how people are but because it is how they are not.

This conclusion sounds provocative, so I should underscore once again the tentative nature of any conclusions in this exploratory work. More research might be warranted on whether the altruism measured in PSM studies has had the practical effect of supporting an overly high level of self-regard in the government sector that may have the opposite effect of that intended by the introduction of non-self-regarding moral principles.

It would be timely to do so. We appear to be, in March 2011, at a delicate moment relative to the meaning of government employment, and possibly a watershed one. Public employees are under pressure as never before to defend their contributions as well as their compensation. The general public is increasingly skeptical, and that skepticism is on display among a number of the sector switchers interviewed, most of whom are no strangers themselves to government work. Whether the altruistic motivations identified in the literature bear upon this important question is another point worthy of further study.
References


Wright, B.E., & Grant, A.M. Unanswered questions about public service motivation: Designing research to address key issues of emergence and effects. Public Administration Review, 70(5), 691–700.

**Exhibit A  Career Paths of Interviewees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Position History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arnie</td>
<td>Attorney, law firms (multiple positions), Director, international non-profit, Owner, small business, Senior positions in non-profits, Executive Director, non-profit, Chief of Staff to US Congressman, Founder and owner of media company, Chief administration and finance officer, state government, Dean, public university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>Volunteer-oriented agency, Political campaign staff (multiple positions), Policy staff, government-oriented think tank, Chief of Staff to US Congressman, Newspaper publisher, VP Human Resources, international charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Public school teacher, Professional position, state government agency, Human resources, local government and public authorities (multiple positions), Human resources, professional services firms (multiple positions), Human resources, private college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanche</td>
<td>Policy staff, federal environmental agencies (multiple positions), Materials management for hospitals, for profit (multiple positions), Materials management in hospitals (several positions), For-profit subsidiary of non-profit hospital association, Vice President, medical equipment firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Associate, law firm, Counsel’s Office, public university, Owner, real estate firm (alongside elected position), Candidate for statewide office, Owner, real estate firm (full-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>Elected state legislator, Owner, real estate firm, Policy staff, municipal economic development corporation, Analyst, financial advisory firm, Senior position, state public authorities (several positions), Executive Director, state public authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>Telephony and technology firms, (multiple positions), Town manager, Controller’s office, international consumer products firm, CFO, financial services firm, Investment management, for-profit firms, Investment management, non-profit entity, COO, private college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuck</td>
<td>Professional position at public university, Management position, mobile home industry, Counseling Office, public higher education, Facilities management, public higher education, President, private facilities development firm for higher education projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>Management position, mobile home industry, Counseling Office, public higher education, Facilities management, public higher education, President, private facilities development firm for higher education projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>Sales, international technology firm, Associate, financial firm, Finance staff, office of state treasurer, Director of state lottery, Commercial banker, Management consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
<td>Attorney, law firms (multiple positions), Director, international non-profit, Owner, small business, Senior positions in non-profits, Executive Director, non-profit, Chief of Staff to US Congressman, Founder and owner of media company, Chief administration and finance officer, state government, Dean, public university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Previous Position(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmund</td>
<td>Private practice of law, statewide political campaigns (several positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster</td>
<td>Public school teacher, training and development, food service industry (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasier</td>
<td>Park system employee, fundraising positions in higher education and health care (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>National economics planner, economic development policy staff, municipal government (several positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray</td>
<td>Congressional staff, financial services positions (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greta</td>
<td>Financial services positions (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Professional positions, state government (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Associate, law firm, financial services positions (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jed</td>
<td>US Senate political campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome</td>
<td>Accounting, Big 8 firm, technology firms (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Self-employed on start-ups for technology firms (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>Freelance writer, public relations positions, non-profit positions (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Public school teacher, academic positions in higher education, marketing positions, for-profit firms (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Public school teacher, academic positions in higher education, marketing positions, for-profit firms (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopold</td>
<td>Design and marketing positions, for-profit firms (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lev</td>
<td>Congressional staff, financial services positions (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Current Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>Senior Finance Staff, State Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Human Resources, Non-Profit Hospitals (Multiple Positions), Self-Employed as an HR Consultant, Human Resources, Law Firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>Attorney, Law Firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Public School Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penelope</td>
<td>Personnel and Training Positions for Financial Firms (Multiple Positions), Co-Founder and Co-Owner of Start Up Consulting Enterprise, Faculty Position at Public University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip</td>
<td>Attorney, Federal Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Attorney, Law Firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quentin</td>
<td>Career Planning and Training, Financial Services Firms (Multiple Positions), Faculty Member, Public Universities (Multiple Positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Commercial Banker (Multiple Positions), Director of Development, Private University, Executive Director, Community Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rilla</td>
<td>Management Consultant for Housing Management Consulting Firm, Principal in Various Start-Up Firms, Cabinet Secretary in State Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger</td>
<td>Professional Positions, State Government (Multiple Positions), Commissioner, State Agencies (Multiple Positions), Executive Director, State Public Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscoe</td>
<td>Congressional Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudy</td>
<td>Business Manager, For-Profit Firms (Multiple Positions), Budget Manager, State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Counselor and Tutor in Camp, Human Resources Staff, Private Firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Human Resources Staff, Non-Profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seth</td>
<td>Reading program, municipal board of education, Staff, psychiatric hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health Care planner, municipal agencies (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ratings Agency analyst, Investment banker (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance staff, federal financial corporation, Consultant on higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for law firm, Finance staff, state treasurer, Life insurance agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Small business owner Lab work, hospital, Small business owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nursing home administrator, Attorney, law firm, County Administrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sonya</td>
<td>Trainer, hotel and hospitality industry (several positions), Municipal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>business administration, Business affairs, semi-autonomous municipal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>corporations (several positions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>College professor Commercial banker, Public university assistants (multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>positions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>Social worker, public social service agencies (multiple positions), Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>work, non-profit hospitals, Therapist in private practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor, non-profit dealing with abused children, Head of marketing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>professional service and law firms (multiple positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Financial services position, Attorney in public court setting, Attorney,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>federal agencies (multiple positions), Attorney, trade association, Attorney,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>financial services firm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

I am Jeffrey Apfel, a doctoral student in public administration at the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers University-Newark. I am inviting you to participate in a study I am conducting. I hope to gain a better understanding of the motivation of individuals as regards employment in the public sector, and am focusing the study on individuals who have been employed in more than one employment sector. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have worked in more than one sector.

In order for me to conduct research I am required to document what is called "informed consent" on the part of those whom I will engage in the research process. Please read this form in its entirety. By signing, you are granting me informed consent to interview you as part of my research and to use data collected in my research.

My research deals with motivational aspects of employment choices, and I am particularly interested in the motivations of people as they have chosen to move between employment sectors. My interviews with you, should you choose to participate, will be on this topic.

If you decide to participate, I will ask you approximately ten open-ended questions about your career and your career choices. Some questions will ask for factual responses. Others will ask you to reflect on your career and career choices and describe their meaning to you. The interviews will be held at your place of employment and will last between 45 minutes and one hour. No other type of participation (physical activity, exertion, etc.) is expected other than responding to several interview questions. Accordingly, risks to you are expected to be minimal. I offer no financial inducement for participation, so the only benefit you will glean is likely to be the recognition that you have assisted in a worthwhile research initiative.

I would like to audiotape the interview and by signing this consent form you also agree that this is permissible. The audiotape may be transcribed into written form and various excerpts may be used by me as part of the data analysis process and in my final research report. However, your identity will at no time be disclosed. The audiotape will not identify you by name, and you are not expected to identify yourself by name on tape. Tapes will be assigned a random number and only I will have a key form linking the interview to you. This key form will be kept in a secure location and will be destroyed no later than five years after the completion and acceptance of my research. No information which
would cause you to be identified will be released by me except following your consent or as required by law.

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time.

Even though I will keep your identity data confidential, I do not anticipate that any question I will ask will require you to make a statement that would be embarrassing or otherwise problematic in the event of a disclosure. I will not be soliciting, nor am I interested in collecting, any data or information that could in any way provide for legal problems or difficulties to you if disclosed.

- Any further questions you have about this study will be answered by me (the Principal Investigator):

  Name: Jeffrey C. Apfel

  48 Harvard St. #2

  Newton, MA 02460

  Phone Number: 617-610-9924

  Email: Jeffrey.apfel@gmail.com

- Any questions you may have about your participation or other concerns that you wish to register with someone other than me can be directed to my advisor:

  Name: Dr. Marc Holzer

  Dean, Rutgers-SPAA

  111 Washington St.

  Newark, NJ 07102

  Phone Number: 973-353-1351

  Email: mholzer@pipeline.com
The entity for which I need to document informed consent is called an institutional research board (IRB). If you would like to contact the IRB for any reason, the contact information is as follows:

IRB Administrator  
Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey  
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Phone: (732) 932-0150 x 2104  
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, but I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable federal, state, or local laws.

Participant Name (Printed or Typed):

Participant Signature:

Date:

Principal Investigator Signature:

Date:
Appendix B

CV

1949 – Born, Worcester MA, October 10

1967 – Graduation from Shrewsbury (MA) High School

1971 – Graduation from Syracuse University, B.A., Anthropology Major

1973 – Graduation from University of Massachusetts-Amherst, M.A.T. Education

1977 – Graduation from SUNY-Albany, M.P.A., Public Administration

1977-78 – Doctoral program in public administration, SUNY-Albany

1978 – Publications: "The Financial Collapse of a City" (with William Eimicke), and "University Assistance to State Government" (with John Worthley).

1978 – American Political Science Association Congressional Fellowship


1978 – Paul Tsongas for U.S. Senate, Field Director

1978-81 – New York City OMB, Deputy Assistant Director

1981-83 – New York State Governor’s Office, Program Associate


1983-96 – Public Finance investment banking in New York and Boston


1996-2010 – Executive management in higher education and law at Rhode Island School of Design, Rutgers University, Ropes & Gray and Brandeis University

2011 – University of Massachusetts-Boston, Visiting Fellow