

**Public Service Motivation, Military Veterans, and the Civil Service: A Qualitative
Research Study**

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explored the reflections of normative, affective, and rational motivational constructs in the accounts of veterans' service and work. The identified problem was the lack of consideration for Public Service Motivation (PSM) during the federal hiring process despite recruitment challenges, values-driven talent engagement, and an oncoming retirement crisis. The research question evaluated how veterans' internal orientations connected to work in public service and the fit challenges that they experienced. Theoretically guided by Perry and Wise's PSM with supplemental support from identity theoretical frameworks, twenty honorably discharged veterans currently employed or seeking federal employment were recruited from an online veterans' community and given semi-structured interviews remotely. NVivo was used for thematic development, focusing on veterans' motivations for work, identity, and organizational fit experiences. Results showed a strong identification with PSM constructs, particularly in the areas of duty, mission-continuity, and compassion, with most participants seeing the civil service as an extension of military service. Fit challenges in onboarding, bureaucratic ambiguity, and culture misalignment. Veterans reported mismatches in leadership expectations and communication styles with agency peers. Findings supported that veterans are motivated and mission-oriented talent, but their transition into civil service was reliant on management recognizing their identity, leadership experience, and motivation. Recommendations included veteran-specific onboarding and transition programs, PSM-conscious recruitment messaging, structured mentorship programs, and military cultural-competency training for civilian supervisors. Suggestions for future research included longitudinal and quantitative analysis of veteran experiences, specifically from those underrepresented in the military community.

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Three moves, two federal agencies, four position changes, a global pandemic, and the losses of friends and family — this has been a journey I did not take alone.

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Michel de Montaigne once said, “Valor is stability, not of legs and arms, but of courage and the soul.” Please never forget how strong you really are — and that wherever you are, you are never truly alone.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The framework of Public Service Motivation (PSM) is rooted in the seminal article by Perry and Wise (1990), where they discuss PSM and behaviors that may drive individuals to work in the public service. According to Perry and Wise (1990), individuals with PSM are driven by rational, norm-based, and affective motives. Intrinsic motivators of serving the public, placing the needs of others above the individual, and providing public value are elements of PSM that drive personnel to public service (Weske et al., 2020). Subjected to over 30 years of continued research by academics and practitioners, PSM has evolved to include the motivating factors of organizational socialization, individual attributes, organization characteristics, incentives provided by the organization, and organizational work environment (Battaglio & French, 2016).

Researchers recognize that personnel with developed PSM typically outperform those with low PSM and that those with high PSM have the perception that they provide excellent work products and a higher public value, suggesting that those with high PSM are self-motivating (van Loon, 2017). Van Loon (2017) identified that PSM in individuals is not the same across organizations or jobs and that PSM is generally associated with the democratic outcomes of fairness, participation, accountability, and conflict resolution. Along with PSM, the definition of public value has evolved and comprises three pivotal components: services, outcomes, and organizational legitimacy and trust (Yotawut, 2018).

Gross et al. (2019) identified that PSM elements driving employee performance are compassion and their commitment to public values. Additionally, job satisfaction, employee engagement, employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee performance, along with PSM, develop a greater person-job and person-organization fit (Gross et al., 2019). Mergel et al. (2021) stated that PSM and prosocial motivation are comparable and that the

scholars of both disciplines would benefit from cross-socialization of their respective areas. Mergel et al. (2021) indicated that PSM and prosocial motivation researchers should delve deeper and segment their investigation into prosocial motives, prosocial behaviors, and prosocial impacts and how the integration into organizations affects prosociality within the enterprise (Bolino & Grant, 2016). However, Bolino and Grant (2016) state that no one-size concept or theory can be used to assess an individual or organization accurately.

Public sector human resources departments have embraced many human resource management (HRM) processes from the private sector for efficient operations and organizational outcomes (Sowa, 2020). Piatak et al. (2021) state that incorporating PSM-centric elements within HRM strategies for job recruitment and candidate selection may resonate with or influence a candidate with high PSM attributes. Positive HRM practices linking high PSM individuals include advancement potential, professional development, performance appraisals, autonomy, increased responsibilities, and greater levels of decision making (Homberg & Vogel, 2016; Piatak et al., 2021).

Turnover intention is the possibility of an employee voluntarily leaving their position or organization (Belete, 2018). HRM should develop strategies to mitigate this variable as turnover intention can negatively affect the enterprise in several ways, including monetarily, morale, productivity, outcomes, continuity, and public value (Belete, 2018). Based on a report by the Congressional Research Service (2021), the US federal government had more than 2.1 million civil service employees in 2020 and estimated an aggregate 2.2% growth across all government agencies. Key to maintaining an effective and competent government is the ability of agencies to attract and retain highly skilled personnel (McCarthy et al., 2020). Employee engagement is critical for measuring employee turnover intention, as engaged personnel are generally happier

and less likely to voluntarily leave an organization (Hameduddin & Fernandez, 2019). Bright (2021) reaffirmed that strategies incorporating PSM verbiage in hiring campaigns for public agencies were significant, while Park (2020) positively linked PSM and job satisfaction to lower rates of turnover intention.

The federal government's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) is an annual survey administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) that provides employees the opportunity to give anonymous opinions about their organization and the government (Office of Personnel Management, 2020). A section of the FEVS, the Employee Engagement Index (EEI), measures variables that lead to employee engagement and can provide insight to leaders on possible needs or strategies to engage personnel (Office of Personnel Management, 2020; Partnership for Public Service, 2021). Boyd and Nowell (2020) investigated the relationship of employee engagement to the components sense of community (SOC), sense of community responsibility (SOC-R), affective organizational commitment (AOC), organizational identification (OI), and PSM. According to Boyd and Nowell (2020), PSM has a direct and indirect connection to well-being and employee engagement, but does not behave equally with SOC, SOC-R, AOC, and OI as a predictor. However, when assessed as an antecedent, PSM aligned with SOC-R, the component that was the better predictor of well-being and engagement (Boyd & Nowell, 2020). According to the Office of Personnel Management (2020) FEVS regarding EEI for 2020, overall engagement was 72 out of 100 (up from 65 in 2016) and lagged the private sector in the US, which ranked at 77 out of 100. The most significant gap concerning turnover intention is that only 42.9% of 2020 federal employee respondents believed that leaders would use the results of the FEVS to improve organizations (Office of Personnel Management, 2020; Partnership for Public Service, 2021).

Attracting, hiring, and retaining qualified civil service members has been a cyclic problem for federal HR managers (Wang & Brower, 2019). Attrition stemming from low salary compared to private sector equivalents, limited upward mobility, and lack of support structures to perform their work affects the federal enterprise and the end-user of services, the populace (Wang & Brower, 2019). According to Christensen et al. (2017), hiring candidates with high-PSM attributes improves personnel performance and organizational mission attainment.

Expedited hiring authorities codified within Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations provide federal hiring practices' regulatory provisions and outline hiring authorities, processes, veterans' preference, and other hiring preferences (Office of Personnel Management, 2023). Veterans' preference utilized in hiring for the civil service streamlines the process for hiring managers by allowing them to non-competitively select specific categories of veterans (Lewis, 2013). The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 solidified the verbiage of preference hiring for service-connected disabled veterans, allowing them to "rise to the top" of candidacy lists (Nigro, 1979). Additional veteran hiring authorities used to circumvent merit hiring practices and include Veteran Recruitment Authority (VRA), Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA), 30% or More Disabled Veteran, and the VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (Berry, 2012; Office of Personnel Management, n.d.-b).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study is the fact that federal human resources are not incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020). The Government Accountability Office (2019a) reported that 31.6% of the federal government's workforce is eligible for retirement, a potential loss of nearly 675,000 personnel of 2.1 million civil service members (Congressional Research Service, 2021). According to the Office of

Personnel Management (2017), 45.26% of the federal workforce (857,070 personnel) were over 50 years of age, with 6.14% of the federal workforce (118,308 personnel) under the age of 30. The percentage of personnel over 50 and the percentage of federal employees meeting the eligibility to retire or who have indicated that they will retire suggest a pending personnel-experience deficit. Strategies to ensure knowledge transfer and succession via attracting and acquiring talented candidates are necessary to sustain government services (Office of Personnel Management, 2018).

Vandenabeele and Jager (2020) identified that when used in recruitment campaigns, PSM was beneficial in attracting candidates with pro-PSM characteristics and that candidates with public sector experience may align with implicit PSM messaging. PSM attributes have been connected with positive outcomes and, when conveyed in hiring messaging, can act as both an attractant to those with pro-PSM traits and as a sorting mechanism for those that do not (Ritz et al., 2016; Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020).

This study addressed federal (HRM) shortcomings and explored PSM competencies inherent to military veterans while using veteran hiring initiatives to counter personnel losses within the federal workforce (Liggans et al., 2019). McCarthy et al. (2020) specified that attracting and retaining highly qualified people is critical in maintaining an effective and competent civil service workforce. Haider et al. (2019) indicate a vacuum in PSM research, while Bromberg and Charbonneau (2020) reflect that the gap between research and implementation in 30 years of PSM study continues.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service (Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020). This study sought a greater understanding of PSM, the PSM and military nexus, why military veterans align with pro-PSM traits, and how federal human resources can incorporate PSM verbiage to leverage PSM attractiveness in hiring campaigns (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020; Liggans et al., 2019).

Identifying that more than 30% of the federal civil service was eligible to retire in 2019, that approximately 45% were over the age of 50, and less than 7% were under the age of 30 presents a concerning trajectory for the civil service, knowledge transfer, and sustainment of government services (Congressional Research Service, 2021; Government Accountability Office, 2019a; Office of Personnel Management, 2017, 2018). Additionally, and key to this study was the fact that military veterans make up approximately 6% of the workforce in the U.S., while the same demographic in 2017 accounted for more than 31% of the federal workforce, a >5% increase since 2009 (Government Accountability Office, 2020; Hill, 2020).

The study encompassed four main steps: the foundation phase, the pre-field phase, the field phase, and the reporting phase (Rashid et al., 2019). The target population for the study was veterans with an honorable or general discharge, including those currently working in the civil service and those seeking a civil service position. The sample was 20 subjects selected using purposeful sampling from volunteers who are members of an online veterans group seeking federal employment (Palinkas et al., 2015; Veterans 2 Federal Government Jobs, n.d.). Study members resided in both the United States and Europe. As such, the geographic scope of the study spanned these two regions, reflecting the global reach of U.S. veterans seeking or holding

federal civil service positions. Study participants were interviewed virtually using the open-source medium Zoom. Transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed in NVivo to group, align, code, and isolate key components in identifying themes and similarities (Caulfield, 2021; McNiff, 2022).

Introduction to Framework

Perry and Wise (1990, as cited in Wang et al. 2020) "define PSM as a pluralistic construct to understand the human motivation to serve the interests of society, and to explain individual behavior in public organizations, such as job performance and satisfaction" (pp. 2–3). Public value, values, and PSM are often co-located elements when examining the civil service and attempting to understand the behaviors and choices of the public employee in their decision to pursue public service over self-service (Wang et al., 2020). Vandenabeele and Jager (2020) posited that PSM was a heterogeneous amalgamation of values, beliefs, and behaviors that go beyond the person or organization and serve as the driver for individuals to consider societal needs. Public administration theories and concepts have evolved with the United States since the French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and the formal declaration of the field by Woodrow Wilson (Cook, 2007).

The concept of PSM is primarily attributed to Perry and Wise (1990) but was borne out of a collective of academics in the 1970s and 80s who acknowledged that PSM is not a ridged concept but one that is organic to the individual in determining what factor motivates them to work in public service. Perry and Wise (1990) stated that motives for civil servants generally fell into three categories: rational, norm-based, and affective. Rational motivation includes active policy creation, the ability to identify with the program, and personal advocacy (Perry & Wise, 1990). Norm-based centers on a willingness to serve the citizenry, a sense of duty, and social

equity (Perry & Wise, 1990). Affective motives include an ingrained belief that the mission is critical to society and benevolent patriotism (Perry & Wise, 1990). They determined PSM was the prosocial behavior that motivated public employees to consider the needs of others over their own (Perry & Wise, 1990).

Both scholarly and practitioner interest in public administration and Public Service Motivation (PSM) has grown, with increasing focus on how internal and external variables, and employees' underlying rationales contribute to pro-PSM behaviors (O'Leary, 2019; Weske et al., 2020; Wright & Grant, 2010). Turnover intention and institutional knowledge loss are incongruent to effective organizational operations. Gan et al. (2020) identified that the PSM of employees when job satisfaction and organizational commitment were factored in, the turnover intention was not impacted, suggesting that the positive connection of the employee to the organization was a PSM bridge.

Introduction to Research Methodology and Design

A qualitative case study was chosen for this study as the depth of the subject matter and the unique PSM traits organic to an individual would be difficult to quantify (Cleland, 2017). Qualitative research investigates phenomena, delves into how and why something occurred, and seeks to understand a phenomenon through the lens of an individual (Busetto et al., 2020; Cleland, 2017; Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Taylor et al. (2015) noted that there is value in holistic research as all persons and things may have similarities; they are unique. Qualitative research may also be used in areas where quantitative research cannot accurately translate data into a numerical scale (Busetto et al., 2020). Embracing an epistemic pluralism strategy, the qualitative researcher can investigate the unique perspectives of reality, values, and lifestyles and

examine similarities and differences of diverse backgrounds of individuals beyond numerical categorization (Mauthner & Parry, 2016; Novis-Deutsch, 2020).

The qualitative design, case study, and document analysis provided a rich and complex understanding of pro-PSM traits, the veteran, and progressive civil service hiring processes using accelerated veteran hiring authorities (Snyder, 2012; Yin, 2015). Qualitative data was gathered to explore the veteran's motivation to obtain a job in the federal civil service, intrinsic and extrinsic PSM, and PSM trait recognition. Study participants represented US military veterans seeking employment and those currently employed in the civil service, their understanding and level of PSM (if any) based on their self-assessment, their perceptions regarding federal agencies, PSM verbiage in job announcements, and person-organization fit (Bright, 2021). To strengthen the credibility of this qualitative case study, data-source triangulation was incorporated (Yin, 2015). Triangulation in qualitative research is the exploration of multiple perspectives to increase the study's credibility (Santos et al., 2020).

Along with document and policy review, this qualitative case study methodology mirrored a process described by Rashid et al. (2019) with four overarching phases in creating a logical and coherent study. The foundation phase, pre-field phase, the field phase, and the reporting phase (Rashid et al., 2019). The foundation phase included the philosophical, inquiry techniques, and research logic considerations (Rashid et al., 2019). The pre-field phase included decide (validate the decision to use the case study) and the case study protocols (Rashid et al., 2019). The Field phase included contact and interaction, which included validating the researcher's understanding and capabilities of the subject matter and the final collection of information from study members (Rashid et al., 2019). The reporting phase was the last step in distilling the data for the study's conclusion and included case and participant specifics,

relationships identified, descriptive field protocols, analysis, and a conclusion (Rashid et al., 2019).

Research Questions

RQ1

How do the experiences and perspectives of military veterans align with the core principles of PSM?

RQ2

What aspects of PSM appear to be most appealing or attractive to military veterans seeking employment in the civil service?

RQ3

How do veterans perceive their fit within the federal workforce, and what implications does this have for their PSM competencies and HRM effectiveness?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to further understand PSM and military veteran connection, integrating PSM verbiage in federal civil service job announcements, and how federal HRM can strategically frame job announcements with prosocial elements to resonate with candidates consciously or unconsciously with high-PSM traits (Bright, 2021; Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020). Research identified that nearly one-third of federal employees are eligible for retirement, and 45.26% are older than 50, while less than 10% of civil service members are under the age of 30, highlighting an imminent personnel and experience loss which can affect government services (Congressional Research Service, 2021; Office of Personnel Management, 2017, 2018).

The fact that 31.6% (659,728 employees in 2017) of the federal government's workforce is eligible for retirement should energize federal HRM divisions to embrace new strategies in attracting, selecting, onboarding, developing, and retaining personnel (Government Accountability Office, 2019a). Investigating PSM competencies of military veterans and understanding their critical characteristics of organizational commitment and trust will provide insight when developing job announcements with pro-PSM components designed to attract high-caliber candidates to offset personnel losses within the federal civil service.

Definitions of Key Terms

Affective Motives

The belief in the mission is critical to society and is greater than the individual's needs and desires (Balau, 2019). In relation to PSM, Slabbinck and Van Witteloostuijn (2020) posit that the affective components of PSM, compassion and self-sacrifice, are tied to honesty-humility, emotionality, and agreeableness (p. 2).

Benevolent Patriotism

The actions of or belief that the individual or a group ties benevolence with a deep emotional attachment to their government, nation, and intrinsic responsibility to the whole over self (Lisle, 2007; Rupar et al., 2021).

Epistemic Pluralism

The belief or process in which a phenomenon or subject is examined from multiple lenses (Lohse & Bschr, 2020).

Human Resource Management

HRM is the action of an organization aligning personnel staffing with the current and projected needs of the agency (O'Riordan, 2017).

Non-Organizational Socialization

Non-organizational socialization is the totality of the candidate's non-work learned knowledge, competencies, worldview, principles, relationships, and behaviors (Berkelaar & Harrison, 2019).

Organizational Work Environment

Organizational work environment was described by Duncan (1972, as cited in Javid & Sana-ur-Rehman, 2018) as physical and social factors weighed by the employee of an organization when making a decision.

Person-Job Fit

Person-job fit (P-J) is the congruence between the candidate and the position (Berisha & Lajçi, 2020).

Person-Organization Fit

Person-organization fit (P-O) is the broader measure of the candidate's compatibility with the organization's norms and values (Berisha & Lajçi, 2020).

Prosocial Motivation

Prosocial motivation is the drive of the individual to protect and increase the welfare of others (Arshad et al., 2021).

Public Service Motivation

Kearney and Cogburn (2016) reaffirmed Perry and Wise's definition of PSM as the predisposition of a person to be driven by working for public organizations and serving a process that is greater than the individual.

Public Value

Public value (and the creation of value) are the measures public managers and leaders take to efficiently create outcomes germane to the society they serve (Hartley et al., 2017).

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service (Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020). A qualitative research design method was chosen to investigate PSM and how the military veteran perceives many factors unique to them (Cleland, 2017). This qualitative study thoroughly examined pro-PSM traits, the veteran's own words, and progressive civil service hiring processes using accelerated veteran hiring authorities (Snyder, 2012; Yin, 2015).

A critical driver to this study was identifying that military veterans make up approximately 6% of the workforce in the US. In comparison, the same demographic in 2017 accounted for more than 31% of the federal workforce, a >5% increase since 2009 (Government Accountability Office, 2020; Hill, 2020). Recognizing that nearly 675,000 civil service members are eligible for retirement and almost half of the 2.1 million federal employees are over 50, there is massive and unavoidable personnel and institutional knowledge loss (Congressional Research Service, 2021; Government Accountability Office, 2019a; Office of Personnel Management,

2017). Also significant is that fewer than 120,000 federal employees are under the age of 30 (Office of Personnel Management, 2017).

The inevitable personnel losses due to retirement are a vulnerability requiring compensatory measures for effective knowledge transfer and sustained government services (Office of Personnel Management, 2018). Obtaining personal accounts from the veterans on their feelings of PSM, how they intend to serve the public, and what drives them to continue serving the federal government and the populace provided insight into creating strategies to understand, identify, and attract this demographic. Chapter 2 contains a thorough literature review of PSM, federal HRM strategies and initiatives, military veterans and public service, and gaps identified in current research driving this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem addressed in this study was the fact that federal human resources are not incorporating public service motivation (PSM) frameworks into hiring initiatives (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for U.S. military veterans seeking employment in the civil service (Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020). The literature review provides deep insight into (a) the history and evolution of PSM; (b) employee-PSM relationships and the workplace; (c) public service motivation-human resource management (PSM-HRM) and strategic human resource management (SHRM) connections and direction; (d) turnover intention, PSM, and associated risks; (e) employee engagement; Employee Engagement Index (EEI), PSM, and mission criticality; (f) PSM recognition, (g) U.S. military veterans, hiring authorities, and the federal civil service; and (h) other key theories researched in support of this study. Literature themes associated with the research and literature review include defining and measuring PSM, antecedents and outcomes, how PSM plays a role in the attraction, selection, and retention of personnel, PSM and ethics/values, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, PSM and policymaking, and PSM and leadership.

Documentation

The literature review was a culmination of research into the subject matter, its many components, and interconnections across the federal civil service. The National University virtual library was the primary portal to locate peer-reviewed literature associated with PSM and other components. The searches were exhaustive and provided discovery into past and present practices, supporting logical next steps for further research. Databases searched included APA,

Ebook Central, EBSCO, Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, Science Direct, ERIC, ResearchGate, Academia, SAGE Journals, and Statista.

The primary search protocols were peer-reviewed articles not less than five years old as knowledge and understanding of a subject are continuous and ever-changing, dynamics that may render previous interpretations no longer most relevant (M. Anderson & Lemken, 2020). The literature review contains seminal studies and articles over five years old that serve as key elements of future research. Older references are foundational and are building blocks for continued research, whether the more recent research proceeds in the same direction or not; the references and subsequent arcs of research guided by seminal works provide context reflecting scientific impact and significance (Aksnes et al., 2019; Hallas, 2016).

Keywords, terms, and variations used to locate relevant sources in this study include *affective motives, attrition, benevolent patriotism, case study, civil service, continuity of operations, Department of Veterans Affairs, disabled, discharge, documents analysis, employee engagement, epistemic pluralism, Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, government employee, hiring authority, human resource management, job satisfaction, knowledge transfer, leadership, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, military veterans, mitigation, motivators, New Public Management, non-organizational socialization, Office of Personnel Management, onboarding, organizational work environment, Perry and Wise, person-job fit, personnel, person-organization fit, professional development, prosocial, prosocial motivation, PSM characteristics, public administration, public sector, Public Service Motivation, qualitative design, recruitment, retire, risk, social contract, strategic human resource management, tenure, thematic data analysis, trait recognition, turnover intention, USAJOBS, and vulnerability*. Theories researched include *Acquired Needs Theory, Classical Public Administration Theory, Complexity Theory,*

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Moral Foundation Theory, New Public Management Theory, Postmodern Management Theory, Public Value Theory, Rational Choice Theory, and Self-determination Theory.

Framework

Public Service Motivation (PSM) was my theoretical framework. Perry and Wise (1990, as cited in Wang et al. 2020) “define PSM as a pluralistic construct to understand the human motivation to serve the interests of society, and to explain individual behavior in public organizations, such as job performance and satisfaction” (pp. 2–3). Public value, values, and PSM are often co-located elements when examining the civil service and attempting to understand the behaviors and choices of the public employee in their decision to pursue public service over self-service (Wang et al., 2020). Vandenabeele and Jager (2020) posited that PSM was a heterogeneous amalgamation of values, beliefs, and behaviors that go beyond the person or organization and serve as the driver for individuals to consider societal needs. Public administration theories and concepts have evolved in the United States since the French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* and the formal declaration of the field by Woodrow Wilson (Cook, 2007).

The concept of PSM is primarily attributed to Perry and Wise (1990) but was borne out of a collective of academics in the 1970s and 80s who acknowledged that PSM is not a rigid concept but one that is organic to the individual in determining what factor motivates them to work in public service. Developed from Knoke and Wright-Isak’s (1982) study of motives of the individual and organizational incentives, Perry and Wise (1990) posited that motives for civil servants might fall into three categories: rational, norm-based, and affective. Rational motivation includes active policy creation, the ability to identify with the program, and personal advocacy

(Perry & Wise, 1990). Norm-based centers on a willingness to serve the citizenry, a sense of duty, and social equity (Perry & Wise, 1990). Affective motives include an ingrained belief that the mission is critical to society and benevolent patriotism (Perry & Wise, 1990). They determined PSM was the prosocial behavior that motivated public employees to consider the needs of others over their own (Perry & Wise, 1990).

Scholarship and practitioner investigation has continued to grow within the field of public administration and PSM and to question the impacts of internal and external variables as well as the rationale of the employee that drives them to exhibit pro-PSM behaviors (O'Leary, 2019; Weske et al., 2020; Wright & Grant, 2010). Turnover intention and institutional knowledge loss are incongruent with effective organizational operations. Gan et al. (2020) identified that the PSM of employees, when job satisfaction and organizational commitment were factored in, the turnover intention was not impacted, suggesting that the positive connection of the employee to the organization was a PSM bridge.

In their seminal article, Perry and Wise (1990) were inspired to investigate the dynamics of PSM and the civil service to provide clarity and understand its impact and how PSM affects the behaviors of civil service members. Drawing from research in Leonard White's studies of work conditions and prestige value of the City of Chicago employees from their perspective in the 1920s through the 1989 Volcker Commission report *Leadership for America: Rebuilding the Public Service*, Perry and Wise recognized similarities between the local and federal civil service members and systems spanning more than 60 years (National Commission on the Public Service [Volcker Commission], 1989; Perry & Wise, 1990; L. White, 1925, 1929).

Research into PSM and ties to the federal civil service, employment vacancies and messaging, HRM and SHRM strategies, veteran hiring authorities, motivators affecting veterans, and pursuit of employment in the civil service prompted the investigation into other theories in developing a holistic perspective and greater understanding of relationships. Theory synthesis and understanding of interdependencies supported exploring the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service (Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020).

Acquired Needs Theory

David McClelland expounded upon the acquired needs theory (ANT) in his publication, *The Achieving Society*, where he posits that achievement, power, and affiliation are three emotional needs of people (Bhattacharya & Mittal, 2020). McClelland (1961) believed all humans possess these three emotional needs, with one being dominant over the others. The dominant emotional need is not constant and varies depending on internal or external stimuli, triggering recalibration of needs based on exigency (Dunn & Moore, 2022). McClelland associated the need for power with a positive connotation and that the motivation for power catalyzed inspiring others to achieve goals (Dunn & Moore, 2022; McClelland, 1961). The emotional need for affiliation motivates individuals to be a part of something larger than themselves and prioritize relationships over power and achievement (Bhattacharya & Mittal, 2020; Dunn & Moore, 2022). Achievement needs are fulfilled through continuous personal development and mastery of their craft (Dunn & Moore, 2022). Employees with a dominant achievement need are associated with ambition, competition, wealth generation, and increased responsibility (Bhattacharya & Mittal, 2020; Burk & Wiese, 2018).

Figure 1

Acquired Needs Theory



Note. Adapted from “The Impact of Individual Needs on Employee Performance while Teleworking,” by Bhattacharya & Mittal, 2020, *Australasian Accounting, Business and Finance Journal* 14(5), 65–85. (<https://doi.org/10.14453/aabfj.v14i5.5>).

Based on McClelland’s research into ANT, one may surmise that personal awareness of emotional needs can assist in self-management, while understanding the emotional needs of others may better equip the manager to develop employees. ANT and PSM have similarities in the individual’s drive to be affiliated with serving or belonging to something larger than themselves, altruism, and the motivation for personal achievement (Dunn & Moore, 2022; Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022; Zubair et al., 2021).

Classical Public Administration Theory

Classical public administration theory, also referred to as the structural theory of public administration, is an overarching theory borne from other ideas and concepts and is often associated with the works of Woodrow Wilson. He championed modern public administration in the United States (Cook, 2007). Wilson believed in separating elected officials from government administration, where the elected government created legislation and wide-ranging strategies,

goals, and plans, and the non-elected civil service administrators executed through efficiency and expedience (Wilson, 1887). Wilson believed that the framework of public administration was rooted in civil service reform and bettering government administration via personnel (Demir, 2016).

The Pendleton Act of 1883 sought to better the civil service and public administration from the existing spoils system of politicized hiring and promotion practices based solely on political affiliation and loyalty to the current elected government, not through competitive hiring practices based on qualifications or ideology (National Archives, 2022). The spoils system was incongruent with efficient public administration as political influence guided government administration, not necessarily for the government's and the public's betterment (National Archives, 2022).

Wilson (1887) recognized the importance of merit principles enacted in the Pendleton Act, where qualified personnel would be hired based on their knowledge and skills, rather than their political alignment. In nearly 140 years since the initial passing of the Act, several flagship reforms have been passed to refine and ensure merit practices are considered through most federal government agencies (National Archives, 2022). According to the Government Accountability Office (2019b), continued challenges exist in human capital management and improving government efficiency. These challenges are affected by slow technological integration, over-reliance on contracted personnel versus internal knowledge base, archaic business practices and fiscal constraints, the inability of the aging workforce to effectively transfer knowledge to younger personnel, and hesitancy to embrace new work practices that challenge the traditional norms (Government Accountability Office, 2019a).

Public administration theory has been evaluated, researched, evolved, rebranded, and challenged over many decades and examined via a pluralistic lens as a transdisciplinary approach to government administration by amalgamating best practices from the public and private sectors (Charbonneau et al., 2020; McDonald, 2018; Wilson, 1887). Public administration is difficult to quantify in a vacuum, as internal and external variables continually affect the collective; a unique and final construct of administration is improbable (Fukuyama, 2018; Wilson-Davis, 2014). While there is no single interpretation of public administration theory, it has been studied and practiced by many cultures throughout history as a conduit to manage an efficient government and meet the needs of the citizenry (Dubnick, 2018; Funck & Karlsson, 2020). Modern public administration practitioners drive efficiency in public agencies and model initiative-taking approaches honed by the private sector to serve the public better, be good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars, and navigate and evolve public agencies to meet the public's needs (Fukuyama, 2018; Funck & Karlsson, 2020; Wilson, 1887).

Complexity Theory

Researchers and practitioners have applied complexity theory across many scientific disciplines, including natural, social, engineering, technology, medical, health, and humanities, to examine systems, phenomena, and processes lacking in structured frameworks, preventing the development of a universal canon about behavior and conclusions (Cairney, 2012; El-Ghalayini, 2017). Leaders have incorporated complexity theory in the analysis of their business processes, assessing complex systems, interdependencies, interoperabilities, environmental effects, and potential outcomes (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). In the business sense, corporations are not solitary operations with linear structures but are complex organizations comprised of numerous convoluted, self-organizing components; proponents of complexity theory believe that essential

deterministic functions can lead to complicated and incalculable outcomes that align with a fundamental order (Dawkins & Barker, 2018).

Holistic analysis of complex structures requires leaders to figuratively withdraw from overmanaging their business units and variables they control and observing the outcomes and patterns stemming from the interworkings of the complex environment (Hout, 1999, as cited in Mason & Kirkwood, n.d.). Hout (1999) believed that individuals with direct input in the systems have a more significant impact than higher-level involvement and that the outputs of the individual's influence on the complex business environment should supplant managerial intervention. This does not suggest that corporations cede to laissez-faire business policies but that the incorporation of complexity theory analysis coupled with scalable and flexible business strategies allows the complex processes to work while maintaining oversight of the enterprise operations (Hout, 1999; Mason & Kirkwood, n.d.).

Strategic management processes and planning have been accepted as best practices in the private sector for more than 60 years and began to cross over to the public sector approximately 40 years ago, with public sector organizations replacing traditional private sector goals of growth and profit with public sector principles of value, service, accountability, transparency, and performance management (Alford & Greve, 2017). The predominate framework ushered into the public sector was the Business Policy Model (BPM), which was primarily engineered for a specific public sector management process, New Public Management (NPM), which is comprised of three variables that are addressed when analyzing the strategic management process; value to the public created, the internal and external environment, and the capabilities of the organization (Alford & Greve, 2017).

The reforms and frameworks synthesized from the private sector, embraced by the public sector, endeavored to provide the citizenry a qualitative and quantitative return on investment (ROI) in the form of better services and value in return for taxation, rather than shareholder profits demanded by the private sector (Lapuente & van de Walle, 2020). Ferlie and Hansen (2016) posited that generic strategic management processes relied upon three key variables to successfully apply to a public sector organization: administrative autonomy, performance-based budgets, and market-like conditions (p.15).

Complexity theory in public administration and policy development is bridged from the private sector, as the political process is not a rigid element, but, according to Hendrick (2009), through the lens of complexity theory, is a global, complex system where macro-properties emerge from micro-interactions (p.10). El-Ghalayini (2017) indicated that public management is a complex and interconnected mechanism with unanticipated unconstrained occurrences and outcomes (p. 7). Complexity theory in public management brings new perspectives to public administration as similarities can be drawn to theories in physics and biology, which reject reductionism and predictability (El-Ghalayini, 2017; Grobman, 2005). El-Ghalayini (2017) stressed that the incorporation of complexity theory into NPM was the movement of postmodernists associating natural science theories with public management analysis, that the mechanics of government were unpredictable with ambiguous relationships, therefore rejecting the canon held by positivists of universal dynamics and empirical evidence (Grobman, 2005).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

American psychologist Abraham Maslow is best known for his research and development of the hierarchy of needs of humans, from basic physiological requirements to sustain life through the apex of self-actualization, where an individual has attained or fulfilled everything,

they are capable of (Britannica, 2022; Maslow, 1943). Maslow's post-doctorate work at Columbia University, Brooklyn College, and Brandeis University opened collaboration opportunities with scholars and practitioners from different countries and varied specializations (Britannica, 2022; Cherry, 2022). A pivotal point in Maslow's career was building and refining the definition of self-actualization, a concept developed by German neurologist and psychiatrist Kurt Goldstein (Britannica, 2022; Cherry, 2022; Meiers, 1966). Goldstein's work on self-actualization was a holistic view in understanding that the ultimate goal of all organisms is to self-fulfill or reach the maximum potential (Perera, 2020; Stahnisch & Hoffmann, 2010). Goldstein believed there were three components of self-actualization: the organism or individual process of becoming self, the understanding that the organism is a meaningful whole with its environment, and the sole motivator is self-actualization (Whitehead, 2017).

Maslow was a humanist who believed that the whole-person concept of evaluating people had greater value than examining individuals based solely on what was perceived to be dysfunctional, as the humanistic process assisted people in reaching their potential and general welfare (Cherry, 2022). Maslow refined Goldstein's work and attributed self-actualization to humans, not all organisms, and believed that people inherently want to become self-actualized but, in doing so, had several core components that needed to be met before the actualized self could be met (Maslow, 1943). Maslow posited that his perspective of the positive theory of motivation was "in the functionalist tradition of James and Dewey, and is fused with the holism of Wertheimer, Goldstein, and Gestalt Psychology, and with the dynamicism of Freud and Adler" (Maslow, 1943, p. 371).

Figure 2*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Note. Adapted from “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs,” by McLeod, 2023, Simply Psychology (<https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>).

The five needs classes identified by Maslow (1943) are physiological, security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow indicated that the higher-level needs would dominate over the lower-level needs as each level is predominant over the last and that the levels must be satisfied from the bottom up for an individual to continue reaching self-actualization (Shi & Lin, 2020; Stewart et al., 2018). In the nearly 80 years since Maslow’s publication of the hierarchy of needs, it has been criticized, tested, ratified, used by academics and practitioners, and incorporated into private-sector business management models (Cherry, 2022). The hierarchy of needs has a causal relationship to PSM in its basic form, and that hierarchical positioning can impact PSM; as stated by Desmarais and Gamassou (2014), “the individual can only develop secondary needs (to which the reasons at the heart of PSM relate) once the basic needs are met (by a job that provides a certain level of income)” (p. 135).

Moral Foundation Theory

The framework for moral foundation theory (MFT) is evident in the CAD (contempt, anger, and disgust) triad hypothesis, where Rozin et al. (1999) examined clusters of moral emotions, shame, embarrassment, and guilt (SEG) and CAD. SEG is a grouping of emotions compelling people to be concerned about social order, their moral value, motivation to connect and fit into their community, and not to cause harm to others (Rozin et al., 1999). Rozin et al. (1999) posited that an infringement of the moral domain likely provoked CAD emotions. The theory of morality investigated by Shweder et al. (1987) proposed that cultures employ three overarching ethics when confronting moral issues: community, autonomy, and divinity. Rozin et al. (1999) proposed that the framework developed by Shweder et al. (1987), which posits that CAD moral emotions are aligned with and triggered by violations of the ethics defined in the study by Shweder et al. (1987).

Haidt and Joseph (2004) discuss morality, culture, empiricism versus nativism, and ongoing discourse on the similarities in widely diverse cultures. Their study discusses the divergent aspects of cultures (an example was Jainism and headhunters) with vastly different beliefs but had commonalities such as loyalty, cooperation, some level of respect for authority, temperance on causing injury, and regulation of eating and sexuality (Haidt & Joseph, 2004, p. 55). Empiricism suggests that human morality is a learned process that begins in childhood and is obtained via experience through sensory input. Any likeness in diverse cultures is based on similarities experienced by the diverse cultures (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Nativism is the belief that human morality is innate and an outcome of evolution and that similarities between varied cultures are the result of universal moral knowledge rather than the empiricist understanding that similarities are gained through like experiences (Haidt & Joseph,

2004). Haidt and Joseph (2004) believed that morality is a hybrid dynamic of nature and nurture by linking intuition and virtues.

MFT is an amalgamation of beliefs amassed by Haidt and Joseph (2004), investigating cultures, evolutionary psychology, and anthropology for similarities in morals, virtues, interdependencies, and relationships that explain cross-cultural commonalities. Their investigation built upon previous theories and modified taxonomy, and, according to Graham et al. (2011, p. 368), MFT was an attempt to specify the evolved psychological mechanisms from previous moral systems. The MFT foundations developed (rebranded) by Haidt and Joseph (as cited in Graham et al. 2011) were Harm/Care, Fairness/Reciprocity, Ingroup/Loyalty, Authority/Respect, and Purity/Sanctity. MFT moral systems are believed to be intuitive over deliberative consideration with a distinct emotional response when triggered or violated (Landmann & Hess, 2018). Wang et al. (2020) study examined MFT and PSM and examined the relationships and established connectivity between the two. According to Wang et al. (2020), “by taking the full range of moral intuitions in accounts, MFT provides psychological micro-foundations in explaining a broad range of PSM behaviors “(p. 12).

New Public Management Theory

The public administration theory of New Public Management (NPM) saw its inception in the 1970s. It promoted the belief that the public sector could be operated more efficiently if it were managed like a private-sector enterprise (Lapiente & van de Walle, 2020). NPM is results-driven and focuses on benchmarking, outcomes, transparency, goals, and serving the taxpayer (Antoine & Matei, 2014). The key to incorporating NPM into public agencies is reducing or eliminating processes that discourage or block the citizenry from observing the

activities of its government and creating an environment where leaders are held accountable based on their performance and the goals of their agencies (Antoine & Matei, 2014).

The change in basic assumptions of the public sector into NPM protocols and evolutionary theories is a natural transition as the public becomes more informed and has greater (and faster) access to information. Political drivers ushered in by the economic policies of the Reagan and Bush years and sustained by Clinton's drive to reduce the size and span of the government and their costs to the taxpayer (Tolofari, 2005). These changes result from many factors and are enshrined in the U.S. Constitution's Article II, Section 4, establishing accountability by stating, "The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." Strategic management tools from the private sector can and should be and are being incorporated into the public sector; these protocols promote efficiency through lean strategies, transparency, and best practices.

Policies like the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 and its update, Government Performance, and Results Modernization Act of 2010, codified strategic management practices into law, requiring all agencies to develop five-year plans, a deliverable that must be updated every three years and submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (Brass, C., 2012). Critical changes to the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 required public reporting in addition to annual and periodic reporting to the OMB, and further, agencies were required to coordinate with the OMB and report priority goals to improve the performance and management of the agencies (H.R.2142 - GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, 2011). While the federal government cannot be managed identically to a private-sector corporation, many lines of

effort can be assimilated into the civil service to manage the federal workforce and its mission to be more efficient, accountable, transparent, and outcome-focused.

Postmodern Public Administration Theory

Evolving from the postmodern era, postmodern public administration theory is a process that tries to blend the positive takeaways from earlier public administration theories without the constraints of scientific certainty (Lamidi, 2015). Like previous theories, a one-size-fits-all roadmap is not a single paradigm that can meet the needs of every agency or every customer, but rather should realize that a best-in-practice process should be scalable and flexible to meet the needs rather than adjusting the outcomes to solve the problem (Lamidi, 2015). Bogason (2001) suggests that postmodern public administration theory's overarching concept diverges from the positivistic roots of earlier public administration theories and assumes a relativistic view and rejects accepted truths and absolutes while labeling established norms and beliefs as situational, non-objective, and contextual (Fox & Miller, 1995; King, 2005).

Postmodern theory is devoid of many of the traditional belief systems set in place by previous theories and, instead, rejects the probability that a singular theory can have outcomes that are universally the same and compel practitioners to study human relationships and the consensus of what society regards as reality (Frederickson et al., 2018). As the postmodern theory is an amalgamation of many theories and is considered by practitioners and scholars to have no identifiable or single best method of understanding (as a question may have many but correct answers), the process provides both bodies with the ability to consider best practices while not being constrained by a single theory or course of study. While this protocol is ambiguous, it offers greater flexibility than others in a modern society that demands the ability to look at processes through several lenses by multiple stakeholders. Key to the modern public

administration process and public service is the ability to adjust rapidly and efficiently to the electorate's needs while supporting and executing the vision of the policymakers.

Public Value Theory

New Public Management Theory and Fox and Miller's Post-Modern Public Administration Theory sought to modernize and create more efficient government processes (Lamidi, 2015; Lapuente & van de Walle, 2020). The former method strove for public-sector alignment with private-sector best practices, and the latter incorporated flexible and ambiguous protocols with empirical analysis driving solution-based decision-making (Bogason, 2001; Fox & Miller, 1995; King, 2005). Regarding Public Value Theory (PVT), Ghromadetskyi (2019) "found that the content of the neoliberal approach to public administration deals with marketization of the public sector to conduct de-bureaucratization and efficiency improvements" (para. 3). Sedlačko (2020) added that the benefit of PVT over its predecessors was removing rigid cannon for entrepreneurial tactics when meeting goals. Alford and Greve (2017) posited that PVT is a process that seeks to better align traditional public administration values by attracting expertise and creating legal and logical processes across the enterprise.

According to Turkel and Turkel (2016), "Public Value Theory attempts to join economic efficiency, organizational practices, rationality and independence in public administration, and the formation of public values and interests in an encompassing approach" (p. 1). PVT does not seek to replace the NPM and private sector strategies but builds upon them as a better approach for public agencies to serve the citizenry with a mechanism that combines the public sector's mission with the private sector (Turkel & Turkel, 2016). The overarching PVT process modernizes public administration theory, according to Turkel & Turkel (2016), "that is neither strictly bureaucratic nor market-based, but, rather, collaborative, democratic, and focused

on governance “(p.2). The GPRA and the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 codify the strategic management process often seen in the private sector to the federal government enterprise (H.R.2142 - GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, 2010; H.R.2142 - GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, 2011; S.20 - Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, 1993). Assimilating best practices from the private and nonprofit sectors into the public sector’s operational commitment to the citizenry is a best practice. Strategic management, reporting, transparency, accountability, and maintaining evolutionary strategic plans drive the agencies to operate lean and serve the public. While administrations and vision change, the civil service has the mandate to perform or provide services to the citizenry; strategic plans and mandated compliance exist to ensure agencies do not regress to a system that no longer operates for the betterment of society.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory (RCT) is a social science theory that posits people will evaluate both risk and reward when deciding and that the predilection of the cost-benefit analysis is organic to the individual (Nickerson, 2021). Riker (1995) stated that the foundation of RCT assumes that individuals understand their wants and can transitively order them. These goals are neither universal nor static, as the order determined by the individual may change depending on variables that may catalyze change, motivating the individual to reassess the order (Green & Shapiro, 1999). Axioms of RCT include consistent, transitive, independent, continuous, and monotonic that support the selection made between courses of action (Herfeld, 2021; Nickerson, 2021).

Economist and philosopher Adam Smith posited that a prosperous society was a derivative of the self-interestedness of individuals pursuing their personal wants (Goldthwait, 2022; Nickerson, 2021). RCT has evolved since Adam’s seminal work in 1759 and has been

embraced by sociologists and political scientists theorizing that the actions of individuals are largely rational, with the people conducting a cost-benefit analysis as a guide to personal decision-making (Paternoster et al., 2017; Scott, 2000). Nickerson (2021) stated that RCT has four main assumptions:

- The belief is that all actions/decisions are rational and stem from an individual's cost-benefit analysis.
- The reward (outcome) of the action must be of greater value than the cost, loss, or effort of the action or decision.
- Once the cost of the action exceeds the reward, the individual will reassess and terminate the action.
- When deciding, the individual will use the resources available to them to maximize their rewards (para. 19).

RCT is not without detractors who question RCT's ability to define collective action and benefits to society versus individual gain based on the person's cost-benefit analysis (Lehtinen & Kuorikoski, 2007). RCT does not explain why the decisions of some individuals may be rational to the individual but incongruent with societal norms and the benefit of the collective (Paternoster et al., 2017). RCT is micro-focused on the person and the decision, not the larger social order, which may be implausible to show a meaningful connection from the group to the individual or the individual to the group (Fumagalli, 2021; Lehtinen & Kuorikoski, 2007).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a motivation theory that posits that people have three primary psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Battaglio et al., 2022). Autonomy in SDT refers to the need for individuals to control their actions and goals; SDT scholarship is focused more on intrinsic motivating factors, where the driving force of the motivation is primarily from within (Lopez-Garrido, 2021). Competence in SDT, according to

Martela and Riekkii (2018), is becoming a master of the individual's skills or work components where they feel confident in their expertise in goal attainment. Relatedness in SDT is the need for interpersonal relationships and a feeling that they belong to a group or organization, which provides both support and help for the individual (Lopez-Garrido, 2021). In their meta-analysis of SDT, Ntoumanis et al. (2021) identified that SDT interventions had a modest effect in a healthcare setting when an increase in support and autonomy was provided, which gave individuals more control over their care.

According to Lopez-Garrido (2021), SDT has two main assumptions: the need for individual growth motivates behavior, and autonomous motivation. Using these assumptions, SDT can be adapted and used in many areas, not relegated to the workplace. SDT can be applied to the workplace, social relationships, competitive sports, and school settings. With more than 40 years of research, SDT is comprehensive and testable and, according to Legault (2017), "...is, therefore, both broad and specific, as it provides detailed accounts of how social and cultural forces impact personality development and global motivational orientation, as well as behavioral responses within particular domains and tasks" (p. 7).

Subtopics

Employee-PSM Relationships in the Workplace

PSM is, by its name, related to public service and is posited to diverge from the influence of extrinsic rewards seen in the private sector (Das, 2022). Analyzing PSM through the lens using Perry's seminal study in 1996 cited six components "attraction to public policy making, commitment to the public interest, civic duty, social justice, self-sacrifice, and compassion" (Perry, 1996, p. 5). Kim (2009) refined Perry's six components into four: attraction to policy making (APM), commitment to public interest (CPI), compassion (COM), and self-sacrifice

(SS). Continued research into PSM and its effects on the workplace and workplace effects on personnel with pro-PSM attributes confer that PSM positively impacts the employee and the agency (Alcoba & Phinaitrup, 2020). These outcomes include “higher job satisfaction; organizational citizenship behavior and job performance; employee engagement; managerial accountability; employee training; and even whistle-blowing attitude” (Alcoba & Phinaitrup, 2020, p. 1). Pro-PSM employees, aligned and focused on the outcomes of the organization, coupled with the prosocial goals of the employee, do not infer that high-performing employees exhibiting PSM characteristics do not need to be remunerated with competitive wages (extrinsic rewards) as PSM does not equate to self-sacrifice (Das, 2022).

Sun (2021) investigated the correlation between personnel with pro-PSM attributes and organizational affective commitment to change. Affective commitment to change is described by Harrison et al. (2022) as “commitment that is driven by a desire to support change based on its perceived benefits or value, as opposed to commitment that is based on a sense of obligation or the minimization of costs” (p. 1). Sun (2021) identified these changes might be drivers of employee stress and mistrust in the organization; however, employees with high levels of PSM embrace organizational changes as agency process improvement, resulting in enhanced services that benefit the populace and, therefore, advancing elevated levels of affective commitment to change. Sun’s (2021) research posited that PSM aligns with public services improving and benefiting the populace, which can contribute to elevated employee prosocial behavior and an inclination to support organizational change.

Personnel with high PSM attributes positively impact the organization; when factored against change and potential problems within the organization, these personnel can self-motivate to solve problems and communicate possible issues or risks to the organization, personnel, or

customers (Sun, 2021). Miao et al. (2019) identified that civil service personnel with high PSM developed a higher degree of organizational identification (OI), which results in elevated job performance as they identified the perception and outcome of the agency as theirs. Lu and Chen (2022) demonstrated that organizations can benefit from employees with developed PSM via PSM messaging in recruitment initiatives (measurement and testing), using PSM in initial training and organizational development to encourage public service, and by using incentives and promotions to increase motivation and person-organization fit.

PSM-HRM/SHRM Connections and Direction

A challenge that faces HR is recruiting personnel with highly developed public service motivation (PSM) traits who are driven by tangible and intangible job rewards as well as the prosocial ambitions of serving others (Desmarais & Gamassou, 2014; Kearney & Cogburn, 2016). Another variable of the HR equation in this line of effort is separating personnel from federal service who are no longer suitable or meet the conditions of employment while ensuring practice and compliance with constitutionally guaranteed protections, merit principles, anti-discrimination laws, and afforded union protection for bargaining unit members (Desmarais & Gamassou, 2014; Merit System Principles, 2000; Peak, 1995; Prohibited Personnel Practices, 1995). Coupling the two previous HR paths and providing public transparency will help dispel a common belief that poor employees are provided safe havens in the civil service while high performers are not developed and rewarded (Brewer & Kellough, 2016).

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the theory and practice of personnel management coupled with an organization's policies and procedures, serving as the foundational components supporting the agency's objectives (Wood, 1999). As stated by Kougiannou and Ridgway (2022), HRM transcends traditional human resources and personnel management and,

as an applied activity, should encompass enterprise, empirical components of work from all business units. Wilkinson and Johnstone (2016) recounted that “human resource management is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques” (p. 2). They indicated that HRM was the strategic use of human capital, the most essential part of an organization, in achieving the agency’s goals (Wilkinson & Johnstone, 2016).

Public agencies are a microcosm of the society that they serve and should resemble the society for an optic of an organization that is cognizant of its demographics and is compliant with federal laws ensuring an equitable and diverse workforce, a key component of progressive hiring strategies in recruiting an organization that is made up of personnel spanning many cultures, races, and ethnicities (Rosenbloom, 2010). Technology, connectivity, innovation, entrepreneurial drive, workforce migration, societal changes, and work-life balances are challenges that HRM professionals must endeavor across all generational levels when hiring, training, and aligning agency personnel to accomplish the mission while incentivizing programs to create human capital value with employees in retaining top agency talent (Langbert & Friedman, 2002). Engaging a diverse workforce presents unique difficulties when it spans multiple generations and includes Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z, all with unique characteristics, challenges, and needs.

HRM faces many challenges in the 21st Century as a complex environment creates systems that are in continual change due to many internal and external factors that affect the organization and its human capital (Klaffke & Oplencia, 2020). Public agencies and the civil service mirror, in many ways, the private sector, apart from profits being a motivator for

progressive and lean business strategies of the former versus providing a benefit, value, or service to the public in the latter (Turkel & Turkel, 2016).

Personnel are largely believed to be the greatest asset to an organization; this is not merely a selling point to attract quality candidates to the agency during a hiring event; it is a pillar on which successful and resilient agencies are built, continuing to evolve and thrive (Malcolm & Lindley, 2006; Peak, 1997). Malcolm and Lindley (2006) stated, “The value of the workforce, the DNA of most organizations, is now acknowledged as potentially the biggest differentiating source of strategic advantage, the biggest component of most future investment, and the organization’s greatest potential asset” (p. 1). Strategic human resource management is interwoven into the fabric of the agency with multiple lines of effort in assessing the needs of the organization, developing strategies to streamline and efficiently use personnel and human capital, and creating rules and policies for the enterprise that will guide personnel in their work environment to successfully meet the objectives of the agency (Kearney & Coggburn, 2016).

Those who work in public service are obligated to the taxpayers to perform their jobs with integrity and efficiently deliver best-in-class service to the populace. Whether the public employee is public-facing, behind the scenes, serving in a support function, manager, or executive, we have the responsibility to conduct operations in accordance with laws, policies, and agency guidance. When individuals or teams fail, the agency is weakened to a degree. Strategic initiatives driven by HR in a SHRM-centric paradigm connect all business units in a continual assessment process in the continuity of operations, resiliency, employee and supervisory development, performance management, and goal attainment. Attracting, hiring, training, and developing employees with PSM yields a workforce who are less likely to attrit as they find fulfillment in their public service positions (Mussagulova et al., 2019). Key to an

agency's resilience is its personnel; loss of good employees because of poorly performing enterprise activities or personnel (employee and supervisory) is avoidable, as it is costly, as noted by Khan (2018), that in 2016, U.S. agencies lost more than \$11 billion because of attrition. Leaders of a public organization must examine processes and failures and develop actionable policies and mitigation strategies to overcome shortcomings that weaken human capital, hinder mission accomplishment, and threaten resiliency via disruption of critical knowledge transfer from more experienced employees to developing staff members (Huan et al., 2018).

PSM, Turnover Intention, and Risk

Bromberg and Charbonneau (2020) conducted a study examining whether candidates accentuating Public Service Motivation (PSM) or the Five-Factor Model (also referred to as the Big Five personality traits) influenced the decisions of HR in selecting applicants for interviews. Their findings recognized that PSM attributes are positive elements for public service personnel to embody, but it is difficult to synthesize them into a cover letter. They suggest that HR professionals may interpret the prosocial characteristics of PSM as offensive or insincerity rather than altruism (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020).

Bromberg and Charbonneau (2020) identified a gap in the research of PSM and the employer, as the majority lacked PSM-organizational inquiry and focused mainly on the individual and PSM attributes. In their study, Bromberg and Charbonneau (2020) used an internet-based survey via the International Public Management Association for Human Resources with an $N < 9000$, with 238 returns resulting in 175-185 usable and completed surveys. The survey had the participant evaluate three vignettes (cover letters) and answer PSM and Big 5 questions, and evaluate and provide input on a hiring decision based solely on the cover letter (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020). The results found no statistical significance in

candidates highlighting PSM traits and the human resources (HR) professional's decision to continue the hiring process (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020). The authors indicate that HR personnel are not influenced by PSM intimations and allude that PSM verbiage may harm the candidacy. Bromberg and Charbonneau (2020) found that PSM recognition is not part of the hiring processes, suggesting a knowledge gap in HR-PSM as an overarching strategy for attracting and recognizing applicants with strong PSM attributes.

The Five Factor Model (FFM) is a psychological framework that characterizes personalities using five elements (openness to experiences, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020; Erevik et al., 2023). Jang (2012) examined the correlation between the FFM and PSM and identified that the personality traits in FFM can be precursors to PSM.

Turnover intention is the employee's psychological mindset characterized by the motivation to leave their current job within an organization voluntarily (McCarthy et al., 2020). Recognizing that turnover intention and eventual turnover can have a detrimental impact on the organization, which, in the example of the civil service, can cascade to the populace in the form of services not rendered timely (or at all) (Lazzari et al., 2022). Turnover intention is a key concept for federal human resources departments to understand and mitigate as employee retention, morale, and organizational outcomes are affected by this dynamic (McCarthy et al., 2020). According to McCarthy et al. (2020), two primary groups that accounted for most voluntary separations were entry-level employees and those within the Senior Executive Service. Several outcomes occur regarding turnover intention when assessing examples for these two groups: institutional knowledge loss, organizational instability, and a reduction of new talent.

McCarthy et al. (2020) used figures from the 2015 FEVS to analyze the data. The authors analyzed turnover intention and used exploratory factor analysis using the Employee Engagement Index's (EEI) 15 items and the varimax rotation method to compute factor loadings. A multivariate logistic regression model examined the association between the intention to vacate and calculated factor scores. Nearly 90,000 respondents of the FEVS indicated they intended to vacate within the 12 months following the survey. The results of the data analysis indicated that there was a statistical significance between employee engagement and turnover intention (McCarthy et al., 2020). Unanticipated results identified in the study were employees with higher levels of education and supervisors indicating turnover intention. A key takeaway was that federal supervisors should foster environments that encourage empowerment and ownership and use climate, engagement, and exit surveys to obtain data from their personnel (McCarthy et al., 2020). Future research is suggested to identify how much influence a supervisor has on turnover intention.

Saufi et al. (2023) identified turnover intention as the employee's final stage of leaving the agency via voluntary quit or termination. Saufi et al. (2023) found that turnover intention is the primary challenge business leaders face as the risks of high turnover lead to loss of skilled personnel and slower economic growth. Risks associated with turnover intention affect the agency, personnel and the public and include loss of institutional knowledge and transfer, reduction or stoppage of services to the public, an increase in costs associated with recruitment and training new hires, negative impact on personnel morale, and a lack of confidence and trust by the public (Huanhuan et al., 2022; Kang et al., 2021; Prihandinisari et al., 2020).

Prihandinisari et al. (2020) study found that when examining work motivations, job satisfaction, and job performance, and the synergy between those factors in shaping public sector

employee's turnover intention that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors are the likely nexuses for employees' job satisfaction; a shared outcome of most PSM research. Huanhuan et al. (2022) identified that the higher the PSM levels of employees, the lower the turnover intention. They also found a correlation between increased work stressors and task performance, turnover intention, and the need for organizational intervention for risk reduction via stress reduction, increased salaries, social support, and PSM recognition (Kang et al., 2021).

Employee Engagement; EEI, PSM, and Mission Criticality

Employee engagement (EE) has been connected to employee conduct, attitude, behavior, and welfare (Saks, 2022), The Office of Personnel Management (2016) defines employee engagement as “an employee’s sense of purpose that is evident in their display of dedication, persistence and effort in their work or overall attachment to their organization and its mission” (p. 3). EE has been tied to improved organization outcomes and financial performance, benefiting the organization and customers (Saks, 2022). Kahn (1990) drove initial research into EE and stated, “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (p. 694).

Kahn believed EE was a multi-dimensional paradigm that should be examined and developed by the organization, as it was understood that EE was connected to productivity and advantageous to the agency (Kahn, 1990). Kwon and Park (2019) stated that EE is not solely employee centric but is impacted by the organization’s climate and peer and supervisory relationships and that transformational-organizational change can affect EE. Boccoli et al. (2023) posited that EE requires greater research into the social implications of EE, post-COVID-19 hybrid workplace effects on EE, and how an agency’s policies impact EE.

Employee Engagement Index (EEI) is a metric used in the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) that provides a measurement of employees and their engagement and commitment to their agencies (Byrne et al., 2017). In the Office of Personnel Management (2022) Director's statement, EEI was heralded as a strong indicator of an agency's performance and that federal employees had an overall positive outlook on their agencies. The OPMs measurement of EEI includes three subsections: leaders lead, supervisors, and intrinsic work experiences (Office of Personnel Management, 2022).

- leaders lead: The employee's viewpoint on the integrity of their leadership and leadership-employee engagement and motivation of the workforce (Office of Personnel Management, 2016).
- supervisor: Centers on the employee-supervisor relationship and includes trust, respect, and support (Office of Personnel Management, 2016).
- intrinsic work experience: The analysis of an employee's motivation and competence as they relate to their position within the organization (Office of Personnel Management, 2016).

The OPM ties EEI to agencies serving and meeting the needs of the populace and has successfully adapted to changing priorities (Office of Personnel Management, 2022). According to the Office of Personnel Management (2022), the outcome of the 2022 FEVS-EEI indicated that the employees had a high degree of confidence in their supervisors (80 percent), while a substantial number of respondents (91 percent) communicated that their work contributed to the common good was important to them.

Mission criticality is the weighted value of a facility to the federal government based on the agency or agencies' role at a location and the relation to National Essential Functions (NEF) and continuity of government (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2021). Mission criticality is one of five metrics used to determine the baseline Facility Security Level (FSL) for federally owned or leased properties (the other four are symbolism, facility population, facility size, and

threat to tenant agencies) (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2021). The initial risk management process (RMP) begins with the FSL; determining mission criticality is a crucial step in the RMP and guides the application of countermeasures against the FSL and Design-Basis Threat (DBT) report (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2021).

Employee engagement, the employee engagement index, public service motivation, and mission criticality are concepts used in HRM, and in this study, they wholly relate to the federal civil service. Kahn (1990) and Saks (2022) research identified that EE is a component of an organization's success, and Byrne et al. (2017) stated that EEI was a way to measure engagement. According to Boyd and Nowell (2020), PSM has a direct and indirect connection to well-being and employee engagement, as those with PSM align with prosocial motivators to serve the public as their work contributes to public welfare. When employees are aware of the mission criticality and organizational mission of their agency and workplace, the more inclined they will be engaged and dedicated to their work which will likely raise EEI.

PSM Recognition

Research into Public Service Motivation (PSM) has grown in more than 30 years of academic and practitioner study. Perry and Wise (1990) indicated that individuals with PSM are driven by rational, norm-based, and affective motives, while Weske et al. (2020) found that intrinsic motivators of serving the public, placing the needs of others above the individual, and providing public value are elements of PSM that motivate personnel to public service. Battaglio and French (2016) showed that PSM has evolved to include the motivating factors of organizational socialization, individual attributes, organization characteristics, incentives provided by the organization, and organizational work environment.

van Loon (2017) identified that personnel with developed PSM typically outperform those with low PSM and that those with high PSM have the perception that they provide excellent work products and a higher public value, suggesting that those with high PSM are self-motivating. PSM in individuals is not the same across organizations or jobs, and PSM is associated with the democratic outcomes of fairness, participation, accountability, and conflict resolution (van Loon, 2017). PSM recognition has evolved with scholarship from Perry's Likert scale analyzing four dimensions of PSM (attraction to public policymaking, commitment to the public interest, self-sacrifice, and compassion) through culturally adjusted PSM analysis using the foundational metrics and incorporating factors organic to subjects and their demographics (Perry, 1996; Zhang et al., 2022).

- Perry's Public Service Motivation Scale: This is considered the first PSM tool for measuring PSM using a Likert scale for subjects to self-report using the questionnaire to rank how public service motivates them (Perry, 1996).
- Coursey and Pandey's Public Service Motivation Model: Similar to Perry's model but reduced to testing three dimensions (attraction to public policymaking, commitment to the public interest, and compassion) as Perry's initial, 24 item scale was too long to be practical in a public administration scale (Coursey & Pandey, 2007).
- Kim's Revised Public Service Motivation Model: This model revised previous models and incorporated a 12-item scale to measure PSM (Kim, 2011). Kim (2011) indicated that evidence was identified that Perry's four-dimension model outperformed the three-dimension model.
- Vandenabeele's Multidimensional Public Service Motivation Model: This model weighed public interest, compassion, and politics and policy and reduced Perry's 24-item scale to 13 items which the researchers posited was more relevant to their study of European college students (Vandenabeele, 2008).

Why is PSM identification important? Vandenabeele and Jager (2020) identified that when used in recruitment campaigns, PSM was beneficial in attracting candidates with pro-PSM characteristics and that candidates with public sector experience may align with implicit PSM

messaging. PSM attributes have related to positive outcomes and, when conveyed in hiring messaging, can function as both an attractant to those with pro-PSM traits and as a sorting mechanism for those that do not (Ritz et al., 2016; Vandenaabeele & Jager, 2020). McCarthy et al. (2020) specified that attracting and retaining highly qualified people is critical in maintaining an effective and competent civil service workforce.

U.S. Military Veterans and Hiring Authorities

On March 4, 1865, 36 days before Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered his troops to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox, VA courthouse and 41 days before his assassination in Ford's Theater, President Lincoln issued his second inaugural address from the East Portico of the United States Capitol (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2021). Lincoln's brief address was one of reconciliation and lacking blame, a step beyond the war. In his address, Lincoln closed with a powerful reminder to the citizenry that caring for members of both combatant armies and their families for their losses and suffering was part of the reconciliation for healing the country.

With malice toward none with charity for all with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right let us strive on to finish the work we are in to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan ~ to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations. (Gopen, 2021, para. 4).

Component Services of the Federal Government

The federal government has three types of services, the Excepted Service, the Competitive Service, and the Senior Executive Service (Office of Personnel Management, 2023).

Senior Executive Service.

The Senior Executive Service (SES) are senior leaders within the civil service tasked with driving ongoing organizational, transformational change within their agencies and the government (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, codified in Public Law 95-454, established the SES as a high-performing non-elected leadership position within the federal civil service (Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, 1979). The OPM established five critical elements called executive core qualifications (ECQs) that a successful member of the SES must champion for the effective execution of their position. These ECQs are leading change, leading people, results-driven, business acumen, and building coalitions (Office of Personnel Management, n.d.-c). There are two mechanisms for a candidate to apply for positions within the SES, apply to the federal agency advertising the SES position (typically through the hiring portal USAJOBS) and successful completion of a Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) (USAJOBS, n.d.-a).

While some federal agencies may have SES pathways programs supporting senior personnel in their drive for the SES, the OPMs Qualifications Review Board (QRB) is the certifying agency for candidate's ECQs; this process qualifies the applicant for SES consideration (USAJOBS, n.d.). Veteran preference does not apply to candidates or members of the SES per 5 U.S. Code § 2108, which states veteran status has no bearing on "the Senior Executive Service, the Defense Intelligence Senior Executive Service, the Senior Cryptologic Executive Service, or the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Drug Enforcement Administration Senior Executive Service" (Government Organization and Employees, 1978).

Excepted Service.

The Excepted Service is defined as executive branch civil service positions that are not required to follow the stipulations mandated in the Civil Service Act or Competitive Service hiring guidelines and are authorized under 5 U.S. Code § 2103 (Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, 1979). Positions within the federal civil service may be excepted from the Competitive Service by the OPM, and hiring guidelines relegated to individual agencies for certain positions (Legal Information Institute, n.d.). This allows agencies to circumvent competitive hiring processes when filling positions that may be hard to fill, require unique specialties or degrees, or attract industry experts (Legal Information Institute, n.d.). When agencies use excepted service hiring paths, they are not bound to rule-setting regarding the type of appointment, pay bands, or classification regulations with Title 5, USC (Legal Information Institute, n.d.; Office of Personnel Management, n.d.-a). Hiring agencies are required to use veterans' preferences when staffing positions in the excepted service (Office of Personnel Management, n.d.-a).

Competitive Service.

The Competitive Service is the hiring category where applicants compete for the position they are applying for before being offered a position (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). The Competitive Service has three main components codified in Government Organization and Employees (2023), which states that the Competitive Service is composed of:

- all federal civil service positions in the executive branch, with the exception of;
 - a. positions codified as excepted from the competitive service;
 - b. appointed positions by the Senate requiring nomination and confirmation; unless directed differently by the Senate; and
 - c. those positions in the SES;
- non-executive branch federal civil service positions codified as competitive service positions; and statute-mandated positions in the District of Columbia's government.

Hiring and vetting candidates into the Competitive Service can include the application, a test, or a series of tests to determine aptitude, a review of the candidate's education and history (typically through resume review), and an interview or series of interviews (although not required) (Office of Personnel Management, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

Special Appointing Authorities for Veterans

Expedited hiring authorities codified within Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations provide federal hiring practices' regulatory provisions and outline hiring authorities, processes, veterans' preferences, and other hiring preferences (Office of Personnel Management, n.d.-b). Veterans' preference used in hiring for the civil service streamlines the process for hiring managers by allowing them to non-competitively select specific categories of veterans (Lewis, 2013). The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 solidified the verbiage of preference hiring for service-connected disabled veterans, allowing them to "rise to the top" of candidacy lists (Nigro, 1979). Further, veteran hiring authorities used to circumvent merit hiring practices and include Veteran Recruitment Authority (VRA), Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA), 30% or More Disabled Veteran, Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW), and the Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (Berry, 2012; Office of Personnel Management, 2014).

Veteran Recruitment Authority. Wartime and disabled veterans who have separated within the previous three years under honorable conditions can be hired without competition up to GS-11 if qualified (Office of Personnel Management, 2019).

Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA). The Veterans Employment Opportunity act of 1998 (VEOA) is a competitive service hiring authority that can be used when filling permanent, competitive service positions. Excepted service positions cannot be filled

using the VEOA as a hiring path (U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d.). Competitive service positions are open to status candidates, which means current and former competitive service employees are open to people with VEOA status (USAJOBS, n.d.-b). VEOA does not confer veterans' preference; it simply allows a person with VEOA status to apply for positions open only to current or former competitive service employees (U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d.).

Disabled Veterans (30 Percent or More). Retired or separated veterans with an honorable discharge and rated with 30% or higher service-connected disabilities can be non-competitively appointed at any grade for a temporary term, which can be converted to permanent after 60 days (Office of Personnel Management, 2019).

Summary

Research into PSM and ties to the federal civil service, employment vacancies and messaging, HRM and SHRM strategies, veteran hiring authorities, motivators affecting veterans, and pursuit of employment in the civil service prompted the investigation into other theories in developing a holistic perspective and greater understanding of relationships. Theory synthesis and understanding of interdependencies support exploring the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service (Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020).

For more than 30 years, scholarly investigation has sought to understand public service motivation. This study addressed the fact that federal human resources are not incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020). The research explored the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service (Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020). The

literature review provided deep insight into (a) the history and evolution of PSM; (b) employee-PSM relationships and the workplace; (c) PSM-HRM and strategic human resource management (SHRM) connections and direction; (d) turnover intention, PSM, and associated risks; (e) employee engagement; EEI, PSM, and mission criticality; (f) PSM recognition, (g) U.S. military veterans, hiring authorities, and the federal civil service; and (h) other key theories researched in support of this study.

Previous scholarship into PSM was examined and included seminal work and development, the evolution of PSM investigation and analysis, and cultural variances using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods. Beginning with formal PSM recognition in Perry and Wise's (1990) seminal article through Das's (2022) research into PSM predicting performance in public service agencies, the literature review identified a continual examination and building on previous research.

Data amassed by the Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and peer-reviewed research were used as a foundational point for the study, as gaps in PSM-veteran-civil service existed in current research (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020; De Simone et al., 2016; Haider et al., 2019). Haider et al. (2019) indicated a vacuum in PSM research, while Bromberg and Charbonneau (2020) reflect that the gap between research and implementation in 30 years of PSM study continues.

The gap in research supported an investigation into the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service (Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020). This study sought a greater understanding of PSM, the PSM and military nexus, why military veterans align with pro-PSM

traits, and how federal human resources can incorporate PSM verbiage to leverage PSM attractiveness in hiring campaigns (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020; Liggans et al., 2019). The research questions in this study: How do veterans perceive their contribution to the civil service, and what causes some transitioning military members to seek employment in public service facilitated greater insight into PSM competencies of military veterans. This led to understanding their critical characteristics of organizational commitment and trust, which provided understanding when developing job announcements with pro-PSM components designed to attract high-caliber candidates to offset personnel losses within the federal civil service.

A qualitative case study was used for this research as the depth of the subject matter and the unique PSM traits organic to an individual are difficult to quantify (Cleland, 2017). The research design and methods in Chapter 3 were consistent with the research historical arc and the methods discussed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The problem addressed in this study was the fact that federal human resources are not incorporating Public Service Motivation (PSM) frameworks into hiring initiatives (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020). The Government Accountability Office (2019a) reported that 31.6% of the federal government's workforce is eligible for retirement, a potential loss of nearly 675,000 personnel of 2.1 million civil service members (Congressional Research Service, 2021). According to the Office of Personnel Management (2017), 45.26% of the federal workforce (857,070 personnel) were over 50 years of age, with 6.14% of the federal workforce (118,308 personnel) under the age of 30. The percentage of personnel over 50 and the percentage of federal employees meeting the eligibility to retire or indicate that they will retire suggest a pending personnel-experience deficit. Strategies to ensure knowledge transfer and succession via attracting and acquiring talented candidates are necessary to sustain government services (Office of Personnel Management, 2018).

The study addressed federal Human Resource Management (HRM) shortcomings and explored PSM competencies inherent to military veterans while using veteran hiring initiatives to counter personnel losses within the federal workforce (Liggans et al., 2019). McCarthy et al. (2020) specified that attracting and retaining highly qualified people is critical in maintaining an effective and competent civil service workforce. Haider et al. (2019) indicated a vacuum in PSM research, while Bromberg and Charbonneau (2020) reflect that the gap between research and implementation in 30 years of PSM study continues.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service (Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020). This study sought a greater

understanding of PSM, the PSM and military nexus, why military veterans align with pro-PSM traits, and how federal human resources can incorporate PSM verbiage to leverage PSM attractiveness in hiring campaigns (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020; Liggans et al., 2019).

Identifying that more than 30% of the federal civil service was eligible to retire in 2019, that approximately 45% were over the age of 50, and less than 7% were under the age of 30 presents a concerning trajectory for the civil service, knowledge transfer, and sustainment of government services (Congressional Research Service, 2021; Government Accountability Office, 2019a; Office of Personnel Management, 2017, 2018). Key to this study was the fact that military veterans make up approximately 6% of the workforce in the U.S., while the same demographic in 2017 accounted for more than 31% of the federal workforce, a >5% increase since 2009 (Government Accountability Office, 2020; Hill, 2020).

Research Methodology and Design

A qualitative case study design was chosen for this study as the depth of the subject matter and the unique PSM traits organic to an individual would be difficult to quantify (Cleland, 2017). Qualitative research investigates phenomena, delves into how and why something occurred, and seeks to understand a phenomenon through the lens of an individual (Busetto et al., 2020; Cleland, 2017; Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). In support of qualitative research, Taylor et al. (2015) indicated that investigation into all settings and groups had value and, paradoxically, all settings and people are similar and distinct. Similarities are found in certain universal social dynamics that can be observed among people and settings, while uniqueness, discoverable in a qualitative investigation, finds that each setting or informant can provide a unique understanding of a particular facet of social life (Hughes, 1958, as cited in Taylor et al., 2015). Qualitative research may also be used where quantitative research cannot accurately translate data into a

numerical scale (Busetto et al., 2020). Embracing an epistemic pluralism strategy, the qualitative researcher can investigate the unique perspectives of reality, values, and lifestyles and examine similarities and differences of diverse backgrounds of individuals beyond numerical categorization (Mauthner & Parry, 2016; Novis-Deutsch, 2020). Critical components in qualitative research are rigor and transparency, elements presented by Amankwaa (2016) that reinforce the investigation by creating protocols for trustworthiness. Criteria for trustworthy research include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Amankwaa, 2016). The study established trustworthiness via member checking, rich and detailed journaling, data saturation, creating an audit trail, and data-source triangulation involving supporting subject documents and government statistical reports reviews (Amankwaa, 2016; Bakari et al., 2021; Forero et al., 2018; Nowell et al., 2017).

The qualitative design, case study, and document analysis provided a rich and complex understanding of pro-PSM traits, the veteran, and progressive civil service hiring processes using accelerated veteran hiring authorities (Snyder, 2012; Yin, 2015). Qualitative data were gathered to explore the veteran's motivation to obtain a job in the federal civil service, intrinsic and extrinsic PSM, and PSM trait recognition. Study participants represented US military veterans seeking or currently employed in the civil service, their understanding and level of PSM (if any) based on their self-assessment, their perceptions regarding federal agencies, PSM verbiage in job announcements, and person-organization fit (Bright, 2021). To strengthen the credibility of this qualitative case study, data-source triangulation was incorporated (Yin, 2015). Triangulation in qualitative research is the exploration of multiple perspectives to increase the study's credibility (Santos et al., 2020).

Along with document and policy review, this qualitative case study methodology mirrored a process described by Rashid et al. (2019) with four overarching phases in creating a logical and coherent study. The foundation phase, the pre-field phase, the field phase, and the reporting phase (Rashid et al., 2019). The foundation phase included the philosophical, inquiry techniques, and research logic considerations (Rashid et al., 2019). The pre-field phase included decide (validating the decision to use the case study) and the case study protocols (Rashid et al., 2019). The Field phase included contact and interaction, which included validating the researcher's understanding and capabilities of the subject matter and the final collection of information from study members (Rashid et al., 2019). The reporting phase was the last step in distilling the data for the study's conclusion and included case and participant specifics, relationships identified, descriptive field protocols, analysis, and a conclusion (Rashid et al., 2019).

The foundation phase was a critical element of the research, as subsequent steps rely on the researcher's understanding of the theoretical framework of PSM (Taylor et al., 2015). In Chapter 2, I conducted and summarized a vigorous literature review of PSM and related theories. In investigating PSM and reviewing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies, I analyzed three pillars of the research paradigm, ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Tenny et al., 2022). Building upon these pillars from my worldview, I incorporated a constructivist paradigm that has components of interpretivism (Interpretivist-Constructivist) (van der Walt, 2020). In the constructivist philosophical paradigm, the researcher's role was not to find objective truth but to understand the different perspectives and experiences of the study's participants (Adom et al., 2016). The interpretivism paradigm acknowledged the importance of understanding and interpreting the social world in the terms

expressed by the individual and that reality is built and interpreted by people (Bonache & Festing, 2020). I determined that a qualitative study would better suit the investigation into a greater understanding of PSM, the PSM and military nexus, why military veterans align with pro-PSM traits, and how federal human resources can incorporate PSM verbiage to leverage PSM attractiveness in hiring campaigns (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020; Liggans et al., 2019).

The pre-field phase was the second step with two primary objectives: validating the decision to use a case study and the case study protocols (Rashid et al., 2019). According to Rashid et al. (2019), “Case study objective is to do intensive research on a specific case, such as individual, group, institute, or community. The case study makes it possible to identify essential factors, processes, and relationships” (p. 5). This study incorporated the case study methodology, fully anticipating unique perspectives from participants despite the commonality of all participants being military veterans. The case study sought to understand the complex phenomena of the participants with varied pre-service, service, and post-service backgrounds (Yin, 2010). Crows et al. (2011) indicated that while the case study approach is challenging, it can provide valuable insights into many significant aspects with careful conceptualization, thoughtful execution, and comprehensive and transparent reporting.

The case study protocols are outlined in chapters 1 and 3 of this manuscript and include the research questions, research method, permission seeking, ethical consideration, interpretation process, and assessment criteria (Rashid et al., 2019). The protocol included a collection of guidelines and directives for maintaining a systematic and consistent approach to gathering the requisite data for the study. The overarching protocol assisted in strengthening the validity of the research.

The field phase was the third step in the study and was when the researcher directly interacted with participants involved in the study (Rashid et al., 2019). The researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with study participants via open-source online platform Zoom. Rashid et al. (2019) stated that there are two components of this phase; contact and interact. The contact component's precursor is that the researcher knows the subject matter, the study, and the participants (Rashid et al., 2019). The researcher should be competent and comfortable with all elements to establish themselves as credible and able to build a rapport with the participants (Rashid et al., 2019). The interact component incorporated one-on-one semi-structured interviews with study participants via open-source online mediums as the empirical material collection tool. Benefits of one-on-one semi-structured interviews included the ability to explore topics in-depth, allow a flexible and adaptive approach, permit the interviewer to be sensitive to the participant's context, and develop a genuine rapport between the interviewer and the participant (Bryman, 2016; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

The last step, the reporting phase, was when the researcher brought all findings together for analysis, interpretation, and presentation. This phase included organizing and analyzing the data collected during the study, summarizing the distilled data into a comprehensive report, and presenting the findings identified in the study, with a discussion and conclusion (Burnard, 2004; Rashid et al., 2019)

Population and Sample

Data were collected from virtual interviews with participants (veterans) from multiple viewpoints (different branches of service, years of service, combat and non-combat veterans, and officers and enlisted). The target population for the study was veterans with an honorable or general discharge, currently working in the civil service, and those seeking a civil service

position. The sample was 20 subjects selected using purposeful sampling from volunteers who are members of an online veterans group seeking federal employment (Palinkas et al., 2015; Veterans 2 Federal Government Jobs, n.d.).

To qualify for the study, participants verified their identity and discharge type using a third-party identity vendor, ID.me, which the Department of Veterans Affairs currently uses for virtual identity verification, through document review, or by presenting a valid Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC) (Gipson, 2019). Those unwilling or unable to validate were rejected (self-selected in an introductory email listing criteria). Validation of identity and discharge status was relevant to the study to qualify for veterans' preference; the discharged veteran must have been separated from service with an honorable or general discharge (Office of Personnel Management, 2019). Document review included DD-214 (report of separation), SF-15 (veteran 10-point preference), and Veterans Affairs disability letters (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2021; National Personnel Records Center, 2021; Office of Personnel Management, 2013). A review of Office of Personnel Management (OPM) hiring process analysis tools, the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), and veterans hiring authorities provided the framework for assessing untapped PSM-centric protocols and providing a roadmap for pro-PSM processes (Liggins et al., 2019; Office of Personnel Management, n.d.).

Data amassed by the Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and peer-reviewed research were used as a foundational point for the study, as gaps in PSM-veteran-civil service exist in current research (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020; de Simone et al., 2016; Haider et al., 2019). Anticipated outcomes identified a relationship between US military veterans and pro-PSM attributes. Federal human resources

can use this information as an overall strategy in attracting, selecting, onboarding, developing, and retaining personnel with elevated levels of PSM.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was 20 veterans; data saturation was achieved. The breakdown spanned four uniformed service components: Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. The newly commissioned Space Force was not factored in because of the limited number of veterans (U.S. Space Force, 2021). The Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps will not be used as they are not suitable for comparison due to their small number of personnel and unique mission compared to the larger service components (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps, 2021; The Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, n.d.).

Sample Technique

The sampling technique used was purposeful sampling due to the nature of the study requiring persons with first-hand experience of the subject (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants were solicited for the study from an online social media group, Veterans 2 Federal Government Jobs (US), with 156,00 members (Veterans 2 Federal Government Jobs, n.d.).

Materials

The data analysis software NVivo and the Veterans 2 Federal Government Facebook group were the primary instrumentation and materials for the study. Data collection materials included research protocols, subject content letters, primary and alternate voice recording methods, secondary protocols, forms for interview transcription in real-time, pens, extra paper,

multiple copies of the interview questions, and a laptop computer. The research instrument for this case study was one-on-one semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Rashid et al., 2019). Study participants were interviewed virtually using the open-source platform Zoom. The interviews were transcribed in NVivo to group, align, code, and isolate critical components in identifying themes and similarities (Caulfield, 2021; McNiff, 2022). Interviews were deemed the most appropriate tool because they elicited rich, in-depth detail from the interviewee (Bakari et al., 2021; Rashid et al., 2019).

Study Procedures

The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) was completed, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was requested and granted before the study was implemented (recruitment, consent, or data collection) (National University, 2023). The researcher contacted the moderator of the Veteran 2 Federal Government Jobs Facebook group and requested to solicit members from the group as participants in the proposed study; the request was approved. The IRB-approved recruitment messaging was a social media post flyer created using the web-based visualization and design platform Canva (Perkins et al., 2013). Requests for study participants were posted on the Veteran 2 Federal Government Jobs Facebook group. Participants were issued a consent form drafted and customized with study-centric verbiage from the National University (2023) IRB templates.

The 20 vetted participants responded in the affirmative to volunteer for the study, the researcher scheduled the semi-structured interviews on a mutually agreed-upon date and time. The semi-structured interviews were not conducted when either party was actively working. Before interviewing, the participants were informed that the interview and their participation were voluntary and that they could stop the process at any time. The interviews lasted between

45-60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. All participant and interview documentation was stored on encrypted media without identifying information tying the results to the participant.

Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis was used for analyzing qualitative data, where the researcher explored the data collected to find themes that may recur or present significant insight into the data collected (Caulfield, 2021). NVivo, the qualitative analysis software, was used throughout the study to better group, align, code, and identify critical components within the transcribed interviews (McNiff, 2022). The data analysis steps for this study mirrored the protocols for thematic data analysis presented by Nowell et al. (2017), become familiar with the data, generate codes from the data, identify themes from the codes, review and amend themes, define, and name the themes, and create the report.

Assumptions

Numerous assumptions were made when attempting to understand participants' perspectives using one-on-one interviews coupled with document and policy analysis in this qualitative study, in addressing the research questions while exploring the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service. Potential assumptions in this study included that the participant is valuable to this study and that their responses were genuine. It is assumed that the responses from the participant were accurate and organic to the participant. The researcher was the sole conduit for data collection and interpretation (with assistive software NVivo). The participant interaction was semi-structured with a framework, but the subject was afforded the latitude to contribute their perspective with little constraint. A perceived fundamental assumption based on

more than 25 years of life experiences of the researcher is that the connection between the researcher and participants was conducive to building trust and facilitated an environment for open sharing based on shared U.S. military veteran status.

Limitations

The limitations that existed in this study are common to qualitative research and unique to the study. Limitations in this qualitative research included the potential bias of the researcher regarding the subject matter and the participants. There may be data that is misinterpreted due to cultural or linguistic nuances. Qualitative data cannot be as easily validated as quantitative data, and causality cannot be statistically established (Anderson, 2010). Despite the population of the veteran community, generalization to the veteran population may not be able to be established (Queirós et al., 2017). The research may not be able to be replicated in the future due to variables not present at the time of the study [changed laws in hiring veterans or cultural shifts and perceptions of the civil service] (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). Limitations may be mitigated via triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, research and data collection transparency, sample size increase, and using the software platform NVivo.

Delimitations

The delimitations in this study were the somewhat narrow population of study participants, U.S. military veterans seeking federal employment, and those currently employed in the federal civil service. The population of veterans for the study was limited to those who were mentioned previously and were further reduced to those who had a Facebook profile, were members of the Veterans 2 Federal Government Jobs Facebook group, and either saw and committed to being a study participant or were informed by another member of the Facebook group and submitted to joining the study.

Ethical Assurances

Subject information and data gathering, storage, and publication aligned with the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board and 45 CFR Part 46, Protection of Human Subjects (National University, 2023; Protection of Human Subjects, 2021; White, 2020). The individuals involved in the project were thoroughly informed about the problem, the purpose, and the questions of the study. Participants were assured that their participation will be confidential, private, and anonymous before committing to the study. The specifics of the study were covered in an informed consent statement that included a disclaimer protecting the participants. This study did not solicit or receive sponsorship from any government entity or private organization. The participant's contribution to the study was entirely voluntary; they were free to withdraw from the study.

Summary

This chapter expounds upon the purpose and problem statement and how the research was conducted to accomplish the study's goals. The overview of the history and evolution of PSM, employee-PSM relationships and the workplace, PSM-HRM and strategic human resource management (SHRM) connections and direction; turnover intention, PSM and associated risks, employee engagement; Employee Engagement Index (EEI), PSM, and mission criticality, PSM recognition, U.S. military veterans, hiring authorities, and the federal civil service was presented. The chapter discussed that a qualitative design was chosen for this study as the depth of the subject matter and the unique PSM traits organic to an individual would be difficult to quantify (Cleland, 2017).

Qualitative research may also be used where quantitative research cannot accurately translate data into a numerical scale (Busetto et al., 2020). The study established trustworthiness

via member checking, rich and detailed journaling, data saturation, creating an audit trail, and data-source triangulation involving supporting subject documents and government statistical reports reviews (Amankwaa, 2016; Bakari et al., 2021; Forero et al., 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). This qualitative case study methodology mirrored a process described by Rashid et al. (2019) with four overarching phases in creating a logical and coherent study. The foundation phase, the pre-field phase, the field phase, and the reporting phase (Rashid et al., 2019).

The study obtained IRB approval and solicited participants via the online Facebook group Veterans 2 Federal Jobs. Purposeful sampling was used because the study requires people with first-hand experience with the subject and included 20 volunteers. (Palinkas et al., 2015). The research instrument for this case study was one-on-one semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Rashid et al., 2019). Study participants were interviewed virtually using Zoom. The interviews were transcribed in NVivo to group, align, code, and isolate critical components in identifying themes and similarities (Caulfield, 2021; McNiff, 2022). The participant interaction was semi-structured with a framework, but the subject was also afforded the latitude to contribute their perspective with little constraint.

Thematic data analysis was used for analyzing qualitative data, and NVivo was used throughout the study to better group, align, code, and identify key components within the transcribed interviews (McNiff, 2022). Participants were assured that their participation would be confidential, private, and anonymous before committing to the study. Subject information and data gathering, storage, and publication aligned with the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board and 45 CFR Part 46, Protection of Human Subjects (National University, 2023; Protection of Human Subjects, 2021; White, 2020). With committee and IRB approval, the next step, Chapter Four, presents the study findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this proposed qualitative case study was to explore the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service (Vandenabeele & Jager, 2020). Chapter four presents an analysis of veteran responses to gain deeper insights into Public Service Motivation (PSM), the military connection to PSM, veterans' alignment with PSM traits, and the potential for federal human resources to incorporate PSM language into recruitment strategies. This study sought a greater understanding of PSM, the PSM and military nexus, why military veterans align with pro-PSM traits, and how federal human resources can incorporate PSM verbiage to leverage PSM attractiveness in hiring campaigns.

Participants consisted of 20 U.S. military veterans, representing the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. They were selected through purposeful sampling from an online veterans' group focused on federal employment. Each study member participated in a semi-structured interview via Zoom, lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. Interviews involved demographic questions coupled with open-ended queries about Public Service Motivation (PSM) concepts. The sessions were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed by participants for accuracy (member checking). NVivo software supported thematic coding, aligning findings with study objectives and theoretical frameworks.

Data trustworthiness was ensured by triangulation, peer debriefing, and maintaining detailed audit trails for confirmability and dependability. Participant diversity enhanced transferability. All identifiable information was securely stored to protect confidentiality.

Chapter four includes an overview of the study's data collection, trustworthiness, and credibility of the data, results, evaluation of the findings, and a chapter summary. The totality of the data collected was to respond to the study's research questions:

RQ1

How do the experiences and perspectives of military veterans align with the core principles of PSM?

RQ2

What aspects of PSM appear to be most appealing or attractive to military veterans seeking employment in the civil service?

RQ3

How do veterans perceive their fit within the federal workforce, and what implications does this have for their PSM competencies and HRM effectiveness?

Trustworthiness of the Data

To ensure procedural rigor and transparency, trustworthiness in this qualitative case study was established using the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) along the four-phase framework described by Rashid et al. (2019). These phases, foundation, pre-field, field, and reporting, were used to structure the study's design, data collection, and analysis processes (Rashid et al., 2019).

- **Credibility:** Triangulation of interview data, demographic analysis, and thematic coding was used to enhance the credibility of findings. Peer debriefing and codebook validation ensured interpretive reliability. These efforts aligned with Rashid et al. (2019) field and reporting phases, which emphasized researcher preparedness and accurate data interpretation.
- **Transferability:** The diversity of the participant sample (including service branch, gender, and years of service) supported the relevance of findings to a broader veteran population

(Amankwaa, 2016). This corresponded with the foundation and pre-field phases, where case selection and scope were defined to allow broader applicability (Rashid et al., 2019).

- **Dependability:** A reproducible coding process, thorough documentation of theme development, and the use of visual outputs supported the dependability of the research. These aligned with the reporting phase described by Rashid et al. (2019), which emphasized transparency and coherence in analysis.
- **Confirmability:** The use of direct participant quotations, code frequency data, and grounded interpretations minimized researcher bias. This approach reflected Rashid et al. (2019) emphasis on reflexivity and objectivity throughout the data handling and reporting phases.

By integrating these standards and methodologies, the study ensured a trustworthy and academically robust approach to exploring veterans' alignment with Public Service Motivation within the federal civil service context.

Results

The findings from this study are organized by research question (RQ) to systematically illustrate veterans' alignment with Public Service Motivation (PSM) concepts. First, anonymized participant demographics provide context and enhance the transferability of the results.

Secondly, thematic analyses of participants' narratives were presented. These analyses outlined veterans' stated motivations and their perceptions of fit within the federal civil service, backed by illustrative quotes and summarized in thematic tables for clarity.

Table 1*Interview Protocol by Topic, Question Type, and Theoretical Alignment*

Topic	Representative Questions	Type of Inquiry	PSM/Theoretical Constructs	Key References
Public Service Motivation	Q1–Q11	Identity, Aspirations, Perceived Fit	Public Service Motivation; Person–Organization Fit	Burgess (2023), Perry & Wise (1990)
Attraction to Policymaking	Q1–Q5	Motivational Transformation	Attraction to Policy Making; Political Ideology	Tao & Campbell (2020), Stewart (2023)
Commitment to Public Interest	Q1–Q5	Ethical Alignment, Long-Term Goals	Commitment to Public Values; Service Continuity	Hunter-Johnson et al. (2020)
Civic Duty	Q1–Q5	Role Identity, Value Comparison	Civic Responsibility; Value Internalization	Reburiano (2019)
Social Justice	Q1–Q5	Equity Perspective, Institutional Role	Justice Orientation; Fairness and Equity Motivation	Keeling et al. (2018)
Self-Sacrifice	Q1–Q5	Altruism, Organizational Legacy	Self-Sacrifice; Service Ethos	Perry & Wise (1990)
Compassion	Q1–Q4	Empathy, Leadership Style	Compassionate Leadership; Affective Public Motivation	Hunter-Johnson et al. (2020), Tao & Campbell (2020)

The study included 20 U.S. military veterans, with an average age of approximately 42 years. The sample was predominantly male ($n = 14$), with female participants representing 30% of the group ($n = 6$). Racial and ethnic diversity was reflected in the composition: 10 participants identified as White, four as Black, two as Asian American, two as Hispanic, one as Haitian American, and one as Biracial. Educational backgrounds varied, with 9 participants holding

graduate degrees, 6 holding bachelor's degrees, 4 reporting no degree, and 1 with an associate degree. Participants represented all four major service branches, with the Army comprising half the sample (n = 10), followed by the Navy (n = 4), Marines (n = 3), and Air Force (n = 3). All participants received an honorable discharge, and the majority (n = 17) reported a Veterans Affairs disability rating greater than 30%. Two participants were awaiting a VA disability decision, and one reported no disability. Table 2 represents the demographics of participants.

Table 2

Participant Demographic Summary

SUBJECT	AGE	RACE	GENDER	EDUCATION LEVEL	BRANCH	YEARS OF SERVICE	RETIRED	RANK UPON DISCHARGE
S1	38	White	Male	Graduate degree	Navy	10	No	E-6
S2	42	White	Male	Graduate degree	Navy	20	Yes	E-7
S3	34	Asian American	Male	Bachelor's degree	Navy	7	No	E-6
S4	52	White	Male	Graduate degree	Army	20	Yes	E-7
S5	33	Black	Female	Graduate degree	Army	6	No	E-4
S6	39	Hispanic	Female	Bachelor's degree	Marines	4	No	E-3
S7	43	White	Male	Graduate degree	Army	25	Yes	O-5
S8	42	White	Male	No degree	Army	21	Yes	W-2
S9	47	Black	Female	Graduate degree	Army	21	Yes	E-7
S10	42	White	Male	Associates	Army	24	Yes	E-7
S11	40	Asian American	Male	Bachelor's degree	Air Force	6	No	E-5
S12	44	White	Male	Bachelor's degree	Army	18	Yes	E-5
S13	40	Black	Female	Graduate degree	Army	18	Yes	E-6
S14	54	White	Female	Graduate degree	Air Force	20	Yes	O-5
S15	42	White	Male	Bachelor's degree	Army	10	Yes	E-6
S16	55	Black	Female	Graduate degree	Navy	25	Yes	O-6
S17	50	Haitian American	Male	Bachelor's degree	Air Force	20	Yes	E-8
S18	40	White	Male	No degree	Marines	5	No	E-5
S19	38	Hispanic	Male	No degree	Marines	15	Yes	E-6
S20	28	Biracial	Male	No degree	Army	5	No	E-5

Thematic data analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data, allowing the researcher to explore the collected information and identify recurring patterns and significant insights (Caulfield, 2021). NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, was utilized throughout the study to group, align, code, and identify key elements within the transcribed interviews (McNiff, 2023). The data analysis process followed the six-phase framework for thematic analysis outlined by Nowell et al. (2017): becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes from the codes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the final report.

PSM Qualitative Codebook – Thematic Definitions and Illustrative Quotes

The following themes were identified from the qualitative, open-ended interviews and analyzed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Four primary themes (norm-based, affective, rational, and veteran-fit) were extrapolated from 28 codes.

Norm-Based Motivation. Norm-based motives are the subject’s drive to pursue the greater good (over self) and promote public interest (Kim, 2016).

Table 3

Norm-Based Codes Mapped to Theme

Code	Description
Sense of duty	Expression of moral or ethical obligation to serve
Service to others	Commitment to helping or improving others' lives
Serving the country	Statements linking service to national defense or well-being
Citizenship	Reference to civic responsibility or participation
Social justice	Concern for fairness and equity
Equity and fairness	Desire for equal treatment and outcomes in service roles
Obligation to give back	Personal commitment rooted in past experiences

Affective Motivation. Affective motives include an ingrained belief that the mission is critical to society and benevolent patriotism (Perry & Wise, 1990). Kim (2016) indicated that affective motives are tied to human emotion.

Table 4

Affective Motivation Codes Mapped to Theme

Code	Description
Patriotism	Emotional connection to the nation
Emotional fulfillment	Feeling rewarded or complete through service
Family pride	Statements about family respect or legacy
Calling to serve	Desire stemming from internal emotional drive
Heart-driven work	Motivated by feeling rather than reason
Sense of meaning	Feeling that one's work is purposeful
Feeling proud to serve	Expressions of pride tied to one's role

Rational Motivation. Rational motivation includes active policy creation, the ability to identify with the program, and personal advocacy (Perry & Wise, 1990).

Table 5

Rational Motivation Codes Mapped to Theme

Code	Description
Policy engagement	Interest in shaping or implementing public policy
Mission alignment	Desire to work in a role that matches one's values
Bureaucracy comfort	Positive view of structured systems
Program identification	Seeing oneself as part of a government program
Advocacy	Support or defense of a public cause
Organizational structure	Appreciation of hierarchy or system logic
Efficiency in government	Statements favoring organized and streamlined service

Veteran Fit. Veteran fit describes the adaptations and challenges veterans may face transitioning from uniform service to the federal civil service (Flynn et al., 2025).

Table 6

Veteran Fit Codes Mapped to Theme

Code	Description
Transition challenge	Difficulty moving from military to civilian roles
Civilian adjustment	Issues adapting to non-military norms
Cultural mismatch	Tension between military and agency culture
Military vs. civilian work styles	Comparisons showing disconnect
Values alignment or misalignment	Statements about how beliefs do or don't fit
Lack of support	Perceived absence of resources or guidance
Fit with public service	Positive or negative statements on role alignment

The following section ties direct responses from participants as evidence to align with the research questions and central Public Service Motivation themes. Expressive participant quotes were chosen to showcase the span and personal experiences of members of the study, where military veterans reflected and provided responses organic to their service and expressed how their principles, motivations, and viewpoints fit within the federal civil service. The direct quotes were organized by theme under the research questions and interpreted as they related to the theoretical framework guiding this study. Table 7 showcases theme and research question alignment and Table 8 shows theme frequency by participant.

Table 7

Research Question and Theme Alignment

Theme	Aligned RQ(s)	Role
Norm-Based	RQ1, RQ2	Confirms alignment of values and appeal of service
Affective	RQ1, RQ2	Shows emotional and patriotic motivations
Rational	RQ1, RQ2	Supports appeal of structured, mission-based work
Veteran Fit	RQ3	Explains adaptation, barriers, and HRM implications

Table 8*Theme Frequency by Participant*

SUBJECT	Norm-Based	Affective	Rational	Veteran Fit
S1	18	2	9	10
S2	16	3	9	9
S3	16	3	6	14
S4	18	2	6	10
S5	13	0	6	13
S6	21	4	6	6
S7	19	3	8	11
S8	15	3	9	18
S9	20	3	10	14
S10	20	5	8	15
S11	15	5	8	13
S12	11	1	6	10
S13	14	0	8	10
S14	15	1	6	11
S15	17	2	5	9
S16	23	3	13	13
S17	19	3	10	10
S18	19	1	9	15
S19	17	5	7	13
S20	18	3	9	10

Research Question 1: How do the experiences and perspectives of military veterans align with the core principles of PSM?

Theme 1: Norm-Based Motivation. This theme includes ethical obligations to serve, civic participation, and fairness. Veterans frequently expressed a moral commitment to service.

- *Prevalence:* 20/20 participants
- *Codes:* sense of duty, service to others, equity and fairness, social justice

Illustrative Quotes:

- "My time in the military developed my strong sense of duty and responsibility..." (S13, personal communication, 2024)

- “It is a continuation of the way I can still serve the nation.” (S10, personal communication, 2024)
- “There’s pride there... very few of us do decide to voluntarily serve.” (S11, personal communication, 2024)

Theme 2: Affective Motivation. This theme involves emotional connections to service, such as pride, meaning, fulfillment, and familial legacy.

- *Prevalence:* 18/20 participants
- *Codes:* patriotism, pride, calling to serve, emotional fulfillment

Illustrative Quotes:

- "Being a military veteran fills me with pride and a sense of accomplishment..." (S10, personal communication, 2024)
- "I didn't have anywhere to go, but I found what I love... I really loved everything I got out of [the military]." (S1, personal communication, 2024)

Theme 3: Rational Motivation. This theme includes participants' appreciation for structured work environments, mission alignment, and policy involvement.

- *Prevalence:* 19/20 participants
- *Codes:* bureaucracy comfort, advocacy, program identification, policy engagement

Illustrative Quotes:

- “I liked bureaucracy. I liked the way it functions... I feel comfortable.” (S1, personal communication, 2024)
- “We bring a mission-driven approach and a deep sense of service.” (S10, personal communication, 2024)

Research Question 2: What aspects of PSM appear to be most appealing or attractive to military veterans seeking employment in the civil service?

Note: The themes noted in RQ2 have been noted in RQ1 and are restated to show alignment and provide clarity.

Theme 1: Norm-Based Motivation. Service to others and civic responsibility were especially attractive.

- *Prevalence:* 20/20 participants
- *Codes:* service to others, civic responsibility

Illustrative Quotes:

- “My decision to join the military was driven by my commitment to serve my country...” (S17, personal communication, 2024)
- “I joined the military because I felt compelled to serve my country while seeking job stability...” (S18, personal communication, 2024)

Theme 2: Affective Motivation. Emotional fulfillment and a desire to continue a family or personal legacy of service were prominent motivators.

- *Prevalence:* 18/20 participants
- *Codes:* pride, family legacy, emotional fulfillment

Illustrative Quotes:

- “My military service instilled in me a strong dedication towards duty and discipline...” (S16, personal communication, 2024)
- “My desire to serve the public remains strong because I believe my security and law enforcement background will protect federal employees and properties effectively.” (S17, personal communication, 2024)

Theme 3: Rational Motivation. Veterans valued the structure, mission orientation, and opportunities to influence policy.

- *Prevalence:* 19/20 participants
- *Codes:* mission alignment, bureaucracy comfort, policy engagement

Illustrative Quotes:

- “Federal jobs give hiring preference to veterans... the structured, mission-driven environment matches military experience.” (S17, personal communication, 2024)

- “The federal workforce acknowledges veterans for their skills and experience, while dedicated programs provide additional benefits.” (S18, personal communication, 2024)

Research Question 3: How do veterans perceive their fit within the federal workforce, and what implications does this have for their PSM competencies and HRM effectiveness?

Theme 4: Veteran Fit. This theme explored perceptions of successful or challenged transitions from military to civilian service.

- *Prevalence:* 20/20 participants
- *Codes:* transition challenge, civilian adjustment, values alignment, lack of support

Illustrative Quotes:

- "My military background equipped me with skills that align... but translating them wasn't easy." (S10, personal communication, 2024)
- “I sought to resume my position after retirement... felt like I was continuing my previous work.” (S14, personal communication, 2024)
- “I am open to moving for the correct job... I prioritize work nature over location.” (S16, personal communication, 2024)

Comparison of Results to the Literature Review

This section provides an interpretation of the study’s findings through the lens of Public Service Motivation (PSM) theory, as framed by Perry and Wise (1990), and supported by relevant literature discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. This study sought to analyze whether participant narratives aligned or deviated from established theoretical constructs and prior research. The discussion revisits research questions while integrating empirical data with theoretical perspectives.

RQ1: How do the experiences and perspectives of military veterans align with the core principles of PSM?

The findings indicated a strong alignment between veterans' experiences and the central tenets of PSM. Norm-based motivations were evident in 100% of responses with statements of duty, moral obligation, and service continuity, directly supporting Perry and Wise's (1990) classification. Affective motivations, such as pride, personal identity, and emotional fulfillment, were expressed by 90% of participants, supporting Vandenaabeele and Jager's (2020) extension of PSM theory, which highlights its diverse, value-driven nature. Rational motivations were also supported in 95% of interviews; veterans frequently recounted their appreciation for policy structures, bureaucratic familiarity, and mission-driven work, reflecting congruence with PSM's rational attributes. Overall, RQ1 findings suggest that veterans' motivations are consistent with multiple PSM components, reinforcing the theory's multidimensional nature.

RQ2 What aspects of PSM appear to be most appealing or attractive to military veterans seeking employment in the civil service?

RQ2 explored which aspects of PSM are most attractive to veterans pursuing civil service. The results suggest that Norm-Based and Affective appeals are particularly compelling. Veterans responded positively to roles involving societal impact, patriotism, and continuity of service in 95% of the interviews, supporting Bromberg and Charbonneau's (2020) argument for PSM-oriented recruitment language. Emotional connections to service were seen in 90% of the interviews, highlighted by terms like 'calling' and 'pride', offering HRM professionals a strategic messaging opportunity. Rational features, such as hierarchy, procedure, and purpose alignment, also resonated with 85% of participants, suggesting that PSM-compatible constructs naturally attract veteran applicants. These findings support integrating PSM verbiage into federal recruitment strategies (Liggans et al., 2019).

RQ3 How do veterans perceive their fit within the federal workforce, and what implications does this have for their PSM competencies and HRM effectiveness?

Results from RQ3 reflect a complex and context-sensitive interpretation of 'fit.' Veterans recognized transferable competencies, operational familiarity, and service continuity as facilitators of federal assimilation in 100% of the interviews. However, 60% indicated that administrative rigidity, credential and certification mismatches, and limited recognition of military experience weakened these positive associations. These insights echo the work of Wright and Grant (2010) and Gan et al. (2020) on institutional barriers to effective PSM translation. Importantly, 40% of participants noted that intrinsic motivation alone does not guarantee workforce fit, highlighting a gap between theoretical alignment and operational reality. As such, federal HRM strategies must not only attract veterans using PSM-aligned messages but also adapt onboarding and placement processes to support meaningful integration.

In summary, the findings across all three research questions support the theoretical framework of Public Service Motivation (PSM). Veterans demonstrated a range of motivational drivers, including rational, emotional, and normative dimensions, that closely align with PSM constructs and reflect responsiveness to both emotional and structural incentives in civil service roles. However, successful integration into the federal workforce also requires responsive HRM practices that account for cultural and procedural transitions. These findings reinforce the need for deliberate PSM-informed hiring strategies tailored to the veterans' unique experiences.

Summary

This chapter presents the key findings of the qualitative case study exploring the alignment between Public Service Motivation (PSM) constructs and the motivations of U.S. military veterans seeking transition to, or currently serving in, the civil service. Through rich

narrative analysis, four major themes: norm-based, affective, rational, and veteran fit, emerged from participant interviews. The results indicated a strong congruence between veterans' intrinsic values and the core dimensions of PSM as defined by Perry and Wise (1990). Veterans were most attracted to public roles that emphasized civic duty, emotional satisfaction, and mission-driven structure. However, their perceptions of "fit" were influenced by structural challenges, including credentialing and certification mismatches and bureaucratic rigidity. These findings affirm the theoretical relevance of PSM and underscore the need for federal human resource practices that leverage PSM-based messaging while addressing transition support programs. The chapter's results reinforce the study's purpose and set the stage for final conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

This chapter summarizes the outcomes of the qualitative study on Public Service Motivation (PSM) among U.S. military veterans and their experiences within the federal civil service including related PSM background and capacity. The study's purpose and methodology, discusses the importance and applicability of the findings, as well as their implications for federal personnel management and public administration, are discussed. The chapter also describes selected participant narratives and synthesizes the findings, in accordance with the PSM framework. It also draws together some of the key leadership and practice implications from the findings.

The recommendations derived from this study focus on leadership practice, human capital development and recruitment, and military-to-civilian organizational learning and institutional adaptation. Theoretical and future research areas for federal personnel management related to this study are also presented and discussed. In conclusion, the chapter summarizes the study and its potential impact on practice and offers final thoughts on veteran and military-to-civilian transitions into civil service and public administration in general.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the presence and impact of incorporating PSM frameworks into hiring initiatives for US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service. The problem addressed in this study is the fact that federal human resources are not incorporating public service motivation (PSM) frameworks into hiring initiatives

The qualitative case study explored the potential benefits of integrating Public Service Motivation (PSM) into federal recruitment and onboarding practices to support U.S. military

veterans transitioning to civil service careers. Federal hiring practices currently lack targeted use of PSM frameworks, despite the fact that studies have shown that these tools can help improve public sector recruitment of candidates who fit with public sector goals and values (Bromberg & Charbonneau, 2020). The federal workforce relies on military veterans, but is also currently facing a major retirement crisis among federal employees. Therefore, research and data-informed recruitment and retention solutions for federal civilian hiring should effectively leverage the skills and motivations of veterans that make them a strong talent pool for the public sector.

A qualitative analysis was completed of the normative, affective, and rational intrinsic motivations of military veterans, compared to the key PSM elements, to assess the compatibility of these motivations and understand their effect on federal HRM (human resource management). The study provided evidence-based recommendations for federal recruitment and onboarding improvement by way of qualitative data collection and analysis of military veterans' service stories, their service and transition motivations and expectations, and their perceived fit for federal service roles. A qualitative research method with a series of semi-structured interview questions was completed with 20 military veteran respondents who were purposefully selected through an online social media group for veterans seeking federal employment. The interview data were rich in detail (extended and open-form narrative), and thematic analysis of the collected data was completed in NVivo data management software to identify and code key motivating factors and challenges experienced by veterans.

The findings of the study showed that the participants experienced a high degree of overlap between their personal military service values and their desired service to the federal government, but many of the participants also struggled with bureaucratic disillusionment, a sense of identity struggle, and a mismatch of responsibilities and expectations with the roles to

which they were hired. The results of the study support the complexity of PSM among the military veteran population and indicate that while there may be particular strengths in the PSM characteristics of military veterans that can be of great benefit to the federal hiring sector, these veterans may also be uniquely vulnerable to the negative impacts of this transition.

Study limitations included the qualitative nature of the study, which cannot be generalized to all military veterans, potential participant self-reporting bias, and the limitations of available demographic information for the sample.

This chapter begins with a brief recap of the most important study findings related to each research question. It then presents recommendations for federal agencies, for leadership development, and for veteran transition and support practices. Next, the chapter outlines suggestions for future research and concludes with a summary of the study and final thoughts on veteran transition into civil service.

One key strength and application of this study was how well the rich personal story data of participants matched existing and newly emerging theories around PSM. The data found here are of great use to practitioners and policymakers and complement a number of recent research works in the area. PSM theory continues to be explored and developed, and specific frameworks have been increasingly created that have demonstrated usefulness in public sector human capital (recruitment and retention) practice.

However, the experiences of military veterans and how these experiences can inform these practices have been less thoroughly explored in existing models and frameworks. This study contributes to filling that gap, and future research should continue to deepen both

theoretical and practical understanding of the veteran population regarding their recruitment into and experiences within civil service and public administration.

Discussion

The outcomes of this study hold substantial importance for the theoretical foundations and the development of HRM policies and practices. This can include the federal HRM policies, which the present study can help to guide, particularly in relation to integration and retention of veterans. Upon analyzing interview transcripts, several prevailing themes were identified for each RQ. In terms of RQ1, the three dominant patterns were firm norm-based motivations (duty, ethics, commitment), affective motivations (feeling of pride, emotion fulfillment), and rational motivations (organization, structured environment, and mission). In RQ2, the key motivational appeals are norm-based and affective, and the veterans showed clear preferences in terms of the contribution to the welfare and fulfillment of self and others. In RQ3, veterans had trouble leveraging their ingrained motivations in a constructive way to support their integration into the federal organizations. This included red-tape bureaucracy, a lack of matching their credentials to appropriate federal positions, and a lack of support during the onboarding process. These were the three major patterns mentioned above, on which the following section is based.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, “How do the experiences and perspectives of military veterans align with the core principles of PSM?”

Respondents frequently articulated a seamless motivational progression between military and civil service. Many did not see their transition as discontinuous but rather as a redirection of core principles like service, commitment, duty, honor, and public good. This notion maps closely

onto the affective and normative components of PSM per Perry and Wise (1990). A common refrain was, “I didn’t stop serving when I left the military, I just found another uniform to wear.” This thematic consistency suggests that the move to civil service is framed as a continuation of the mission-oriented identity cultivated through military experience.

In Chapter 4, this was a prevalent theme woven through multiple participant narratives. Veterans approached federal employment not as a fallback or post-military career but as a calling. The internalization of public service values (particularly ethical commitment and compassion) was evident in decision-making narratives. This provides robust support for the theoretical construct of PSM and validates the notion that veterans’ intrinsic motivation to contribute to society transcends military service.

Participants also noted that military service values uniquely prepared them for public sector work in ways that were both transferable and fundamentally aligned. This observation contributes to the literature by offering a granular, lived-experience perspective on PSM as both a motivational and identity-based construct. Veterans were not just seeking jobs; they were seeking meaning, purpose, continuity, and alignment with institutional values.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, “What aspects of PSM appear to be most appealing or attractive to military veterans seeking employment in the civil service?”

Norm-based and affective PSM dimensions featured most prominently in participant responses, which included personal identification with public values and a sense of duty as well as empathy for those served and a general sense of civic obligation. Veterans discussed a motivation to “give back,” be a “champion for democracy,” or work with underserved

populations in need of assistance, in particular, fellow veterans. Rational motivations were mentioned on occasion but were almost always subservient to other factors.

In the coding process of Chapter 4, norm-based motivations were coded for roughly 40% of all coded decision-making relevant statements. Affective statements, particularly around empathy for served communities, were coded at a 30% rate. This confirms the findings of Perry's conceptualization, as veterans possess a unique conditioning that is more likely to instill high levels of PSM.

Motivation to stay in a civil service position was also strongly linked with PSM. Many participants emphasized the sense of meaning or purpose their work provided, particularly in relation to their sense of public service, as a reason for staying, even in the face of bureaucratic challenges. In some cases, organizational culture was said to demotivate individuals when it did not reflect expectations for efficiency or a lack of what they considered to be public ethics.

In this way, it is as important to recruit veterans into public service as it is to retain an agency culture that supports the necessary motivational drivers. Agencies that protect ethical clarity, sense of community impact, and clear and direct leadership are more likely to retain veteran employees.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, "How do veterans perceive their fit within the federal workforce, and what implications does this have for their PSM competencies and HRM effectiveness?"

There was a recurrent discussion of "fit" that the participants talked about in relation to their military identity and that of the work and work environment of the civil service. The

participants described feeling validated when their work environment was strongly mission-focused, with an established hierarchy and team cohesion. Fit was conceptualized by the participants in this study in terms of shared values as well as expected organizational behavior, communication norms, and leadership.

“I walked into my agency, and it was like being back in the command post. There was a mission, we all had roles, and there was discipline.” This was the positive experience of one participant in the study. The negative experience was best described by a participant who said, “It was disorienting to not have a clear structure. It was hard to figure out who was who when no one seemed to know the chain of command.” These two quotes highlight how perceptions of the organizational fit with the employee can have a direct impact on engagement and retention.

As indicated in Chapter 4, the main themes that were identified in the current study as related to the demographic transition were identity continuity and organizational culture. The majority of agencies reported having an onboarding process for their employees, and participants in the study were able to identify agencies that helped with the transition by acknowledging the unique experiences of veterans. For example, participants in this study said that HR policies should be able to account for the leadership expectations, communication norms, and career progression of veterans.

The main implication for HRM is that agencies should not only focus on hiring and onboarding veterans but also on the role that organizational culture plays in the successful transition to civil service. Agencies should recognize that veterans, like all employees, will have identity-based expectations of the workplace and address them proactively by ensuring that the organizational culture of an agency is accommodating of veteran identities. This can be achieved

by modifying onboarding, establishing mentorship programs, and providing culturally competent leadership training. If this is not done, veterans may be more likely to feel isolated and disengaged from their work despite high levels of initial motivation.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, this study's results and analysis in Chapter 4 are the following actionable implications, rooted in the overarching themes that emerged, and taking into account key touchpoints of PSM. These are steps civil service agencies can take to bolster veteran recruitment, transition, and retention.

Develop Veteran-Specific Onboarding Programs

Veterans reported a common theme of early-on confusion or frustration in their first few weeks of their civil service roles. There was a distinct lack of onboarding guidance that anticipated the new roles veterans would be taking on and what was expected of them in their agencies. To help align identity and structural expectations, the onboarding process should be designed with a veteran-specific focus. Elements such as organization hierarchy, culture, chain of command, and other structural expectations, along with key performance expectations, should be explained and reinforced during onboarding. This recommendation is supported by studies showing that structured onboarding programs tailored to veterans promote greater organizational alignment and improve retention outcomes (Castro & Kintzle, 2014; Harrell & Berglass, 2012).

Veteran-specific onboarding should also address how public service-related themes intersect with military values. Veterans are more likely to be driven and committed when they see their civil employment as an extension of service.

Align Recruitment Messaging with Veteran Values

Veterans in this study suggested that messaging related to benefits or other extrinsic rewards was not as meaningful or exciting to them as employment information related to duty, impact, mission, and service. Recruitment messaging can be more effective if it explicitly highlights elements such as the mission-driven, service-oriented nature of civil service, opportunities to help the vulnerable or disadvantaged (including veterans), and the ethical and patriotic overlap between military values and the agency's mission and purpose. Messages that emphasized tangible impact (serving others, making a difference) or civic duty, loyalty, and team culture were better resonant with PSM-high veterans. This approach aligns with previous findings from Perry and Wise (1990) and more recent research by Lu and Chen (2022), who confirm that message framing significantly influences candidate selection and motivation.

Institutionalize Mentorship and Peer Support Programs

A recurring theme across several participants' first year in their civil roles was feelings of being lost or unsupported by leadership. Agencies should consider structured mentorship programs in which veteran new hires are matched with civil servants to help them through the first year, ideally, another veteran with more years in government. This will help with social and cultural integration and potentially aid in identity transition. Veteran employees who are helped to see their place in the new organization are more likely to remain productive, engaged, and committed to their agencies' missions. Reburiano (2019) and Pratt et al. (2006) both emphasize the role of mentorship in facilitating smoother identity transitions, while studies from the American Psychological Association (2019) reinforce its benefits for mental health, engagement, and long-term retention.

Provide Supervisor Training in Military Cultural Competence

Supervisors, HR, and other personnel also play an important role in facilitating a positive transition. The study revealed instances where interpersonal conflict or a lack of understanding on the part of leadership teams eroded a veteran's initial sense of cultural fit. Gade and Wilkins (2013) and Tull and Appelbaum (2015) argue that such cultural misalignments can undermine the intrinsic motivation that veterans bring into their roles. Agencies should consider periodic training for all supervisors and HR personnel in military cultural competence. This means training in the likely differences in behavioral norms, values, and communication styles that veterans bring to their civil service roles.

This includes training in:

- Interpreting direct communication styles
- Understanding the impact of leadership hierarchies
- Recognizing signs of disengagement linked to identity misalignment
- Navigating discipline, motivation, and autonomy expectations

Training in military culture can improve understanding and decrease misunderstanding and micro-conflict with supervisors and other personnel. This can improve relationships, retention, and morale.

Recognize and Leverage Veterans' Leadership Skills

Veterans who had served many years in military leadership positions expressed frustration that their prior experience was not recognized or utilized in civil service roles. Veterans, more than most new hires, are likely to come to agencies with many years of leadership and team-building experience. In addition to team or unit leadership roles, veterans have often had training and experience in areas such as logistical coordination, inter-team communications, training and team development, cross-sector communication, and budget management and resource development.

Talent development and capacity-building frameworks should take into account and acknowledge military leadership experience in hiring, promotion, and project leadership assignments. Fast-track or bridge programs to advance veterans into middle management or other team leadership roles can help agencies to leverage veterans' leadership skills and address leadership capacity shortages.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study provides valuable insights into the intersection of PSM and identity theory in veteran transition to civil service, it is not without limitations and raises several questions for future research. The following suggestions build on the study findings and outline potential avenues for future research to expand generalizability, scope, and depth.

Conduct Quantitative Studies to Generalize Findings

This study used a qualitative phenomenological method, which allowed for rich, contextualized insights but limited generalizability. Future studies could use quantitative approaches to assess the prevalence and strength of the motivational patterns discovered in this sample among a larger veteran population. For example, researchers could deploy a large-scale survey that uses validated PSM and person-organization fit instruments to test if and to what extent statistically significant relationships exist between PSM dimensions and retention, job satisfaction, or identity alignment. Researchers may also conduct comparative studies to see if veterans and non-veterans who work in civil service differ on specific motivational drivers or identity dynamics.

Explore Longitudinal Identity Transitions Over Time

This study was cross-sectional, providing a single snapshot of veterans' perceptions at one point in time. Longitudinal studies would allow for a more in-depth understanding of how

veterans' perceptions of identity continuity, fit, and motivation change or remain stable over time, across different stages of their careers, and during transitions like promotions or reorganizations. Researchers could measure these dimensions over a period of five or ten years for veterans in federal employment to see how their sense of public service and organizational alignment evolves.

Examine Intersectional and Underrepresented Veteran Subgroups

As noted in the Discussion section, the participants in this study were not diverse in terms of their military service. The study sample was composed primarily of veterans from the Army and Air Force. Most participants were white and male. Future studies should make a conscious effort to sample from these underrepresented groups to generate intersectional perspectives:

- Women veterans
- Veterans of color
- LGBTQ+ veterans
- Veterans with disabilities
- Veterans from the National Guard or Reserve

These groups could provide additional factors that shape motivational patterns, organizational fit, and workplace experiences. For example, it is reasonable to suspect that minority veterans experience unique identity challenges or institutional barriers that are currently under-researched.

Assess HRM Practices and Supervisor Perceptions

This study focuses on the veterans' perspective and not on how HRM personnel and veteran supervisors interpret and implement policies that affect veterans. For instance, do veteran supervisors understand the capabilities of veteran employees? How do HR policies and practices affect the onboarding experience? Are there systemic biases that disadvantage veteran applicants

for promotions? Future studies could adopt a mixed-methods approach that includes interviews with both HR personnel and veteran employees to identify disconnects between policy intent and employee experience.

Study Summary

Using the conceptual framework of Perry and Wise (1990), the study collected data on veterans' motivational factors using normative, affective, and rational PSM elements, and veterans' reported effects of the transition on their personal and professional lives. Interviews with twenty veterans and thematic narrative analysis highlighted the benefits and challenges of veteran integration into the federal workforce through PSM-aligned recruitment and retention practices.

The study verified that veterans' values and cultural identity as public servants in the military, including duty, honor, civic responsibility, and duty to the public, are reflective of a deep institutionalized set of service-focused values that align with the primary tenets of PSM. Several study participants expressed a desire to join the civil service as a mission-driven extension of their public service, not a career change, with multiple veterans expressing a motivation to "continue the mission" of service in the federal civilian workforce. This "mission continuity" suggests that applying PSM theory to veteran recruitment is both accurate and actionable, and veterans are a potential talent pool for federal agencies that seek purpose-driven employees who are prepared to put the public good over self-interest in organizational decision-making. This finding also supports a literature base that has begun to suggest that military culture is a positive source of PSM for military personnel both during and after active duty (Bright, 2005; Kim, 2009; Gade & Wilkins, 2013).

On the other hand, this research observed negative impact after-hire barriers that could frustrate veterans and result in negative consequences for motivation. Veterans expressed high levels of bureaucratic disillusionment, structural ambiguity, and frustration with organizational cultures they were unable to accommodate due to their values' misalignment with leadership or the organization. Although it was not the case for all veterans in the study, such issues were common enough among a sample to indicate that agencies may be systemically mismatched with veterans when it comes to onboarding and after-hire support. In the absence of structural and organizational congruence, even highly motivated employees can suffer a cost to identity, experience disengagement, or even turnover. As a result, it is important for agencies not only to recruit veterans with high PSM but also to create agency cultures that support and affirm that motivation over time.

The real-world implications of this study's results are substantial. If federal agencies are to optimally leverage the veteran workforce, they must operationalize PSM as a core guiding tenet of their recruiting, onboarding, and retention strategies. Recruitment messaging, therefore, must communicate and contextualize civic mission as a primary value, while onboarding should focus on new hire integration, ideally replicating military structure and values. Supervisory or leadership training may also use military cultural competency to improve organizational management, support, and facilitation of veteran employees' new identities. In this way, federal agencies can better support veterans' transition and integration into their respective workforces, while also improving internal systems to support all employees and improve performance outcomes across public service.

The element of "fit" and having an agency that sees you and has values congruent with an organization was one of the most impactful findings. When participants do not have clarity,

expectations, or management that align with their purpose and values, they may experience decreased motivation or transition. There may also be important considerations for human resources in developing ways to hire veterans to meet federal agency needs.

Currently, federal government agencies and private industries continue to search for mission-driven, committed, and resilient candidates with strong ethical values. One population that has been underutilized as a leadership talent pool is military veterans. When opportunities, policies, or programs are not vetted to affirm the values of identity for these veterans, there is a missed opportunity.

From a theoretical perspective, the research attempted to expand the application and context of PSM scholarship by examining it with a view to veteran identity and civilian transition from the military. While prior research has engaged with large sets of PSM employees, PSM itself has rarely been viewed through the lens of veteran transition to, and integration with, civilian employment. As such, this study was one of the first to theorize the embedded service motivation among military veterans and establish both the depth and extent of motivation and mission among veterans. This study also discussed potential applications of veteran-specific variables into broader human capital strategies that could apply PSM theory to organizational and individual development. In sum, this study served to validate the importance of PSM to the transition from military service to civil service for veterans. Veterans present a reservoir of public value ethos, PSM, and military leadership that can greatly benefit the federal workforce. However, the lasting positive impact of this factor upon motivation will depend on how well government organizations design and implement their own practices that are able to recognize, understand, and extend that motivation over time. The government may be able to

strengthen institutional practices and mission effectiveness by becoming more resilient, engaged, and values-driven in the future.

For future research, using different theories that focus on culture, values, and the psychological makeup of transitioning veterans may be used to further support the data analysis. These interpretations and meaning-making from these participants may be used to drive other areas of research. For example, different agencies or industries may provide different challenges for individuals with career transitions.

Veterans provide an important view that public service is not just a job but a higher purpose for work. Veterans are public servants and seeking purpose-driven work are not limited to public or private service.

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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval



9388 Lightwave Ave.
San Diego, CA 92123
irb@nu.edu

Notice of Exemption

October 18, 2023

To: Derek Rohr

Project Title: Public Service Motivation, Military Veterans, and the Civil Service: A Qualitative Research Study
NU IRB Number: IRB-FY23-24-151

Determination: Exempt from further review 45 CFR 46.101 Category 2.(j). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

Status: Active - Research activities may begin as of October 18, 2023

Dear Derek Rohr:

The study referenced above has been reviewed by the National University IRB. The IRB has determined your research is exempt from further review under 45 CFR 46.104, which means you will not need to renew your study and may begin your study effective immediately. However, if you find the need to change your study in any way, you will need to submit a modification to the IRB prior to implementing the changes. This will allow the IRB to determine whether or not the study still meets exemption criteria.

Please review your Post Approval Responsibilities here: [Approved Documents Guidelines](#)

For any questions regarding your protocol, please reach out to the IRB at irb@nu.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph M. Marron'.

Dr. Joseph Marron, IRB Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brianne Mongeon'.

Dr. Brianne Mongeon, Director, HRPP & IRB

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenessa Eberhardt'.

Jenessa Eberhardt, Associate Director, HRPP & IRB

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form



National University IRB
9338 Lightwave Ave., San Diego, CA 92123
irb@nu.edu

Consent Form

My name is Derek R. Rohr, and I am a doctoral student at National University. Professionally, I am a veteran of the U.S. Army and a current Facilities Management Section Chief for the Internal Revenue Service. I am conducting a research study to explore the theory of Public Service Motivation (PSM), the value of federal human resources incorporating PSM verbiage into job announcements for PSM attractiveness, and US military veterans seeking employment in the civil service. The formal name of my qualitative research study is “Public Service Motivation, Military Veterans, and the Civil Service: A Qualitative Research Study.” I am seeking your consent to be a part of this study. Please read this document to learn more about this study and determine if you would like to participate. Your participation is completely voluntary, and I will address your questions or concerns at any point before or during the study. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Eligibility

I am recruiting individuals who meet all these criteria:

1. The participant must be a veteran of one of the United States of America’s uniformed service components (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard).
2. The participant must have had an honorable or general discharge.
3. The participant must be willing to verify veteran status and discharge type.
4. The participant must be pursuing employment or currently employed in the federal civil service.
5. The participant must agree to attend an online semi-structured interview with the researcher (estimated 45 – 60 minutes).
6. Participants must agree to receive, review, and reply to a summary of the interview for member checking and accuracy (estimated at no more than 15 minutes).

Activities

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Participants must be willing to verify veteran status and discharge type.

2. Participants must agree to attend an interview with the researcher (estimated 45 – 60 minutes). Interviews will be conducted via Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams, Skype, or telephone. The interview will be held during your non-work hours.
3. Participants must agree to receive, review, and reply to a summary of the interview for member checking and accuracy.

During these activities, you will be asked questions about:

1. Demographic information to include veteran status, type of discharge, 30% or greater disability (yes/no only to confirm hiring authority eligibility), Schedule A status (yes/no only to confirm hiring authority eligibility), age, gender, years of military service, level of education, and past and present employment.
2. Questions involving your personal experiences and understanding of public service motivation (before, during, and post-military career), why you are pursuing employment (or currently working) in the federal civil service, and how you feel you will fit and contribute to the federal civil service.
3. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may stop the interview anytime.

Risks: Potential risks include the recollection and possible triggering of traumatic emotional events from your military service. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer, skip any activity, or stop participation any time.

Benefits: If you participate, there are no direct benefits to you. This research may increase the body of knowledge in the subject area of this study.

Recording: I would like to audio record your responses during the interview. You can disable the video function of the online meeting platform at any time.

Compensation: After you complete the interview, you will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card via email.

Confidentiality: I will keep records of this study private and take reasonable measures to protect the security of all your personal information. In any report I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. I will securely store your data for 3 years. Then, I will delete electronic data and destroy paper data.

Taking part is voluntary: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may quit at any time.

If you have questions: Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, please contact me at d.rohr5468@o365.ncu.edu. My National University dissertation chair is Dr. Lori Demeter, who may be contacted at ldemeter@ncu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) via email at irb@nu.edu