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A ROAD LESS TRAVELED?:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES LEADING COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES INTO PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICE CAREERS

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A ROAD LESS TRAVELED?: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES LEADING COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES INTO PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICE CAREERS

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ABSTRACT

Growing out of the larger concern for the general status of civic engagement in the U.S., this study focused on professional public service as a form of civic engagement and sought to understand the motivational factors that led recent college and university graduates into careers in public service. In examining the broad spectrum of motivational factors that draw college and university students toward professional public service, this study engages literature from the fields of Public Service Motivation (PSM) and undergraduate civic education. In addition to exploring the range of formational and transformational factors that contribute to an individual's public service ambition, personal characteristics, dispositions, ethical beliefs, and reward preferences were also considered. Additional attention was given to the impact of higher educational experiences within the larger examination of motivational influences leading individuals into public service careers. As a qualitative study, research was conducted using a *narrative inquiry* approach, drawing data from semi-structured interviews of 13 active public servants in three different geographical locations within the U.S. Each participant had graduated with a baccalaureate degree between five to 10 years from the time the interviews were conducted and had entered full-time professional public service shortly after completing an undergraduate degree. Using a *praxis* interpretive framework, built on the basic structure of *being - doing - reflecting (becoming)*, the findings revealed three key conclusions: 1) the participants were intrinsically drawn to professional public service; 2) the respondents' reward perspectives were largely non-material in character; and 3) the professional public service pathways of the participants were guided by the need for self-actualization.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The Problem of American[1] Civic Disengagement

Throughout U.S. history, many of the country's leaders have emphasized the necessity of civic engagement and the role it plays in preserving democracy. Some of the nation's most treasured speeches have extolled the virtue of civic engagement, cautioned against its deficiencies, as well as its excesses, and sounded a clarion call to present and future generations to invest their lives in civic action. Perhaps no greater nor more iconic charge to public service can be found than in the words of President John F. Kennedy (JFK) given during the waning moments of his inaugural address: "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country" (Kennedy, 1961).

As he delivered those immortal words, it is virtually impossible to know whether or not JFK realized that the tide of civic engagement was turning in the U.S. It has been suggested (Volcker, 2003) that Kennedy's call for citizen duty came at the pinnacle of a wave of civic engagement that had swept through the mid-point of 20th century, beginning when the country rallied to overcome the Great Depression, to fight a second World War, and to rebuild the nation's economy. The wave continued to crest throughout the decade of the 1960s as citizens fought for civil rights, supported efforts to protect consumers and the environment, and pressured the nation's leaders to end the country's involvement in the Vietnam War. During this time, "generations of young Americans were drawn to public service by a powerful sense of mission," especially within government, which was seen as a "magnet for the passion and commitment of talented citizens" (p. 8).

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[1] While I am aware of the controversial use of the term, I have chosen to apply the word "American" throughout this study to residents and/or citizens of the United States and to the nation's political culture. This connotation of the term is common within political literature, making the use of a different label logistically problematic. I request forbearance of anyone who might take offense to my usage of the term.

But the tide of civic activism, particularly through traditional and institutional avenues, began to ebb toward the end of the 1970s as the economy struggled, and both domestic and international scandals rocked the nation's political institutions. The sentiment captured in an oft-quoted line from President Ronald Reagan's first inaugural address - "In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem" (Reagan, 1981) - seemed to slowly take root in the American psyche.[2] Referencing numerous studies, Robert Putnam (1995) identified a number of areas where civic engagement declined throughout the 1980s. By 1992, public confidence in government institutions had fallen to 25% from roughly 70% at the beginning of the 1970s. Voter turnout had declined by nearly 25% from its previous high point in the early 1960s. And the percentage of Americans engaged in other more traditional forms of civic participation (e.g., communication with elected officials, attendance at public meetings, and campaign volunteerism) fell from the mid-20s to the low-teens.

During this period, similar trends were also evident among young Americans. During their 30-year study, Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Osgood, and Briddell (2011) observed significant civic disengagement among the nation's youth. While Putnam was concerned with trends within the general population, Syvertsen and associates focused their research on a sampling of high school seniors whom they surveyed over a 30-year period beginning in 1975.[3] During the same basic time frame on which Putnam concentrated, the percentage of high school

[2] The "sound byte" character of this quote should not go unnoticed. It should be stipulated that Reagan's quote was not generally anti-government, as evidenced by the comment's context. Reagan's declaration was in response to the economic crisis facing the country at the time and summarized his beliefs about the government's role in a free market economy. Nevertheless, the phrase itself, stripped of its context, would later become a basic tenet of American conservatism.

[3] It is important to keep in mind that the Syvertsen study organized and analyzed their findings along the lines of college aspirations. Their findings were broken down into the three categories related to the educational intentions of the respondents: 1) attendance at a four-year school; 2) attendance at a two-year institution; and 3) no college aspiration.

seniors who expressed confidence in government institutions fell from the mid- to upper-50s in the early 1980s to a low of 31% in 1994. Another decline was observed when respondents were asked about their intentions to vote in the next general election. By 1995, students who said they intended to vote fell from the observed high point of 89% in 1981 to an aggregate average of 79%. Responses to questions about participation in the political process revealed further decreases among young adults. When asked about their interest and/or involvement in non-voting, institutional (e.g., correspondence/interactions with elected officials, campaign donations, and volunteer work for candidates), and traditional (e.g., various types of public demonstrations or protests) forms of civic participation (which researchers referenced as "conventional" and "alternative" activities respectively), positive responses among respondents dropped from roughly 26% in 1980 to 20% in 1990.

During this time, the declining rates of political participation caught the attention of policymakers and other civic leaders. Due in no small part to mounting evidence produced by researchers like Levine and Kleeman (1986) and others (Cleary and Nelson, 1993; Ingraham and Kettl, 1992), the National Commission on the Public Service was created in 1987 to address the "erosion in the attractiveness of public service at all levels", perceived as undermining "the ability of government to respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of the American people, and ultimately [damaging] the democratic process itself" (Volcker, 1989 - Preface).

Shortly after the National Commission on the Public Service was launched, two notable pieces of legislation were created, aimed at mitigating the dropping rates of civic engagement. The National and Community Service Act (1990) was created in large part to encourage a renewal of civic pride and civic duty among U.S. citizens and provide impetus, especially for the nation's youth, toward increased civic engagement, political participation, and public service (§§

2). Three years later, in an effort to bolster federal government support for increased civic engagement, particularly through the institutional public service, and to manage federal resources more efficiently, the National and Community Service Trust Act (1993) was passed that amended the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as well as the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973. The new policy reauthorized and reorganized programs and initiatives established by the two previous laws, and it created the "Corporation for National Service and a National Service Trust program" to generate increased federal government investment and provide "expanded opportunities for national service and educational awards for participants" (Introduction).

It is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of these and other national efforts to address the nation's declining civic engagement.[4] But evidence of an increased awareness of the "quiet crisis" (Levine and Kleeman, 1986) in civil service was appearing in other sections of society, especially among educators (see below). During the intervening decades, research data on civic engagement have painted a blended picture of both positive and negative trends. Much of the data was generated by studies aimed at the country's youth, particularly those ages 18 to 30. Referencing a handful of studies conducted in the mid- to late-2000s, Flanagan and Levine (2010) observed that youth participation in the more traditional and institutional forms of civic engagement rose slightly from their low points in the 1990s. Though the downward slide of civic action was mitigated somewhat during the first decade of the 21st century, the levels remained low compared to their high points in previous years and, according to the authors, did not come

[4] Cleary and Nelson (1993) assert the minimal effectiveness of the Volcker Commission due to: 1) a lack of official presidential and congressional involvement; and 2) competing presidential and congressional commissions, the latter of which was tied to the legislation discussed in this section. With regards to the impact of the commission's recommendations, the authors conclude that the commission most likely raised awareness of the need for renewed civic engagement, and positively influenced political perceptions of the federal bureaucracy, but yielded little in terms of policy changes.

close to compensating for 30 years of decline (p. 161). Similar trends were observed by Syvertsen, et al. (2011) who noted slight upward trends in voting and participation in conventional and alternative forms of civic engagement (see above). Both teams of researchers observed one form of civic participation that rose steadily throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Volunteer activities, particularly in community service ventures, rose to a high point of 34% in 2005, outpacing by 10 percentage points the previous mark set in 1977 (Syvertsen, et al., 2011, p. 588-592). As will be considered at greater length below, Flanagan and Levine (2010) posit that some of the increased involvement by the nation's young adults in community service endeavors may have been related to concentrated efforts to incorporate and standardize service learning in educational curricula throughout the country (pp. 161-162).

More recently, the federal government's labor statistics provide positive news regarding the number of Americans employed in public service careers. Based on survey data and statistical projections, the number of individuals seeking careers in key public service areas were on the rise and projected to rise higher into the 2020s. From 2005 to 2017, employment in education and health services nationwide increased by an aggregate average of 36%, with federal employment in these same areas almost doubling during that time. The number of individuals employed in protective services increased moderately during this same period (7%), while employment in community and social service occupations jumped by 21%. Using 2012 numbers and employment trends from the previous years, the Department of Labor estimates that employment in each of these areas will continue to increase. By 2022, employment in public service occupations is projected to increase as follows: education services: 11%; health services: 25%; protective services: 9%; and community and social services:17% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

Another source for cautious optimism related to levels of youth civic engagement is found in research that examines political participation via social media. Studies generated during the mid- to late-2000s argued for revising categories of political activism that would include classifications such as *public voice* that can be observed through online activism, particularly through social media. These studies also offer indications of an increased level of political activism, especially on the part of American and European youth, through a variety of internet-based means that fall outside traditional measurements of civic engagement and blur the lines of political geography (Dalton, 2009; Earl, Kimport, Prieto, Rush, & Reynoso, 2010; Rheingold, 2008; Skelton, 2010; Skelton and Valentine, 2003; Xenos and Foot, 2008).

While increased volunteerism, public service employment, and social media activism all provide reasons for some optimism, the outlook for civic engagement through more traditional and institutional means remains bleak (Syvertsen, et al., 2011). More recent research has not only raised concerns about civic engagement as a whole, but has, more fundamentally, alerted researchers to the growing deterioration in the attitudes of people, especially young adults, living in western democracies regarding democratic governance itself. Using World Values Survey (WVS) data gathered from a broad demographic section of people in the United States and the European Union throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Foa and Mounk (2016) depict a growing skepticism and unease within consolidated democratic regimes. In general, the authors assert that respondents have become "more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives" (p. 6).

On one hand, Foa and Mounk offer evidence that corroborates the data discussed previously. When examining levels of political interest, individuals in the U.S. who were 36

years-of-age and older showed slightly higher levels of interest in 2010 (67%) than their counterparts in 1990 (63%). The level of political interest among Europeans in this same age group remained the same in 2010 as in 1990 (52%). Where a decline in political interest was most notable was in the 16-35 age bracket. In the U.S., political interest among younger Americans dropped from 53% in 1990 to 41% in 2010, while moderate or strong political interest expressed among European youth dropped from 48% in 1990 to 38% in 2010 (p. 12).[5] While these numbers by themselves do not necessarily cause concern for the researchers, other trends suggested reason for alarm.

Foa and Mounk examined other attitudinal indicators related to four types of measures not frequently studied: 1) support for democratic governing systems as a whole; 2) confidence in key political values of liberal democracy (such as civil rights); 3) willingness to advance political causes through institutional means; and 4) openness to authoritarian alternatives (e.g. military rule). These indicators were associated with survey questions designed to gauge respondent support (p. 6).

One of the key questions surveyed annually from 2005-2014 was whether or not respondents believed that "it is essential to live in a country that is governed democratically". Responses were measured on a Likert scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being "essential) and were divided into six cohorts based on the participant's decade-of-birth, beginning with the 1930s through the 1980s. Analysis of the time-series data revealed steady declines in ratings of "10" (i.e., "essential") with each passing decadal cohort. The greatest disparity was seen between the oldest and the youngest Americans. On average, 73% of respondents born in the 1930s provided

[5] Increased levels of political interest among the older demographic of 2010 may be a positive sign since these individuals were represented in the younger cohort in 1990. See Flanagan and Levine, 2010 for analysis of non-political factors contributing to increased civic action as individuals grow older.

a rating of 10, while only 31% of survey participants born in the 1980s provided a 10 rating to this question (pp. 7-8).

Analysis of support for specific democratic systems centered on the attitudes of respondents who were asked to evaluate on a scale of "very good" to "very bad" how they felt about "having a democratic political system run this country" (p. 9). Responses were divided into age groups: 65+, 45-64, 35-44, 25-34, and 16-24. Data comparisons were drawn from responses by age group in 1995 and 2011. Foa and Mounk paid particular attention to the number of "bad" and "very bad" responses. In 1995, only 5% of Americans 65 years-of-age and older believed a democratic system was a bad or very bad way to run the country, while 17% of 16-24-year-olds believed it was bad or very bad. By 2011, both age groups had grown increasingly critical of American democratic governance with 13% of the oldest Americans and 24% of the youngest group responding "bad" or "very bad" (p. 8-10).

Finally, and perhaps most alarming, was the interest on the part of respondents in more authoritarian governance. Another time-series data set dealt with "very good" to "very bad" responses that gauged how those surveyed felt about a "strong leader" who does not have to "bother with [legislatures] and elections" (p. 14). The question appeared on the survey every five years between 1995 and 2010. Instead of analyzing the data by age groups, researchers categorized survey responses based on income as participants self-identified their economic status level using income ranges assigned to numbers ranging from "1" to "10". When examining those who responded "good" and "very good", researchers found that roughly 19% of those surveyed in 1995 who placed themselves in the upper-three income brackets showed support for more authoritarian leadership compared to 27% who identified as lower- or middle-income. The level of acceptance expressed for more authoritarian governance continued to climb

in both income groups throughout the 2000s, reaching a high point of authoritarian support in 2010 by 32% of lower- and middle-income respondents, and 34% of upper-income participants. The authors note that the apparently aberrant statistical jump among the wealthiest Americans, whereby these respondents surpassed the lower- to middle-income groups, should not be surprising considering the redistributive economic philosophies common among democracies throughout western history. As the wealthiest have grown richer, the assertion is made that their interest in economic redistribution has waned (p. 13-14).

While Foa and Mounk contend that the empirical data suggest a trend toward deconsolidation of the world's most stable democracies, a trend the authors believe is being ignored by most notable political scientists (pp. 15-17), other scholars suggest a more measured interpretation is warranted. In his examination of the WVS data, Inglehart (2016) suggests less-alarmist conclusions can be drawn. Decidedly, Inglehart agrees with his fellow researchers that demonstrable support for democratic governance is weakening globally, due in no small part to ideological shifts within the United States where democracy "has of late performed quite poorly, often even worse than other advanced democracies" (p. 19). But Inglehart moderates concerns about democratic decline for two main reasons. First, the totality of the WVS data provides other clues omitted by Foa and Mounk that, when viewed as a whole, demonstrate minimal democratic deconsolidation. Granted, indicators of democratic decline in the U.S. are causes for concern, especially as the rest of the democratic world tends to follow where the U.S. leads. However, it is possible that the rate at which American attitudinal support for democracy might be deteriorating may seem particularly stark because, statistically-speaking, it had the most room to fall. In other words, given the faith that the people of the United States have historically invested in democracy, any significant reduction of that faith would appear dramatic (pp. 19-20).

Second, Inglehart believes the WVS data provide evidence of a political phenomenon for which he has argued throughout his career. Beginning in 1970, Inglehart identified a political transformation, particularly within industrial societies whereby basic value priorities were being altered generationally "as a result of changing conditions influencing their basic socialization" (Inglehart, 1971, p. 991). Using the lens of shifting value priorities, Inglehart evaluates the WVS data along the lines of perceived economic security. Inglehart's "theory of value change implies that relatively secure people are likely to be more tolerant and to be more supportive of democracy than are less secure people" (2016, p. 20). In other words, the more a society feels existentially secure, the more open it is to the ideals of democracy. Conversely, high levels of existential insecurity, which Inglehart argues can be expected given the economic stagnation and rising financial inequality among western societies within the last decade, are "conducive to authoritarianism, xenophobia, and rejection of new cultural norms" (p. 20). While these factors in themselves are no less disquieting as they relate to deteriorating civic engagement, Inglehart asserts that weakening support for democracy is rooted more in the lived experience of individuals than in mere ideological conversions (pp. 20-23).

In the final analysis, Inglehart, Foa, and Mounk agree that the fault lines of democratic deterioration are evident and failure to address the causes of discontent within democratic societies could have far-reaching effects. Perhaps it goes without saying that reduced confidence in democratic governance will, by its very nature, negatively impact levels of political participation. If attitudes and activism within civil societies continue to deteriorate, a decline in civic engagement may become the rule rather than the exception.

The foregoing discussion illustrates the need for action to contain civic disengagement within the United States and other democratic societies. While sober evaluation of the data

should mitigate against rampant “Chicken Little Syndrome” among researchers and political leaders, empirical evidence supports the belief that the declining numbers of civically engaged members of civil society merits further attention. Some more positive elements of civic engagement scholarship offer encouragement that concerted efforts to reverse this trend can be successful. Questions remain, however, about the most effective means for securing the future of democratic civic engagement. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that efforts to reverse course will need to be multi-faceted, involving numerous agencies within democratic societies. In light of this challenge, the possibility exists that the historic role of education to precipitate political transformation is needed now more than ever.

Civic Engagement and the Role of Education

The belief that democratic governance is dependent on the educational level of its citizens is not a new thought. As far back as ancient Greece, political thinkers have placed education alongside a few key forces for promoting civic aptitude and political action within a democratic society (Dudley and Gitelson, 2003). Even before the British colonies of North America declared their independence from Great Britain, civic leaders voiced support for maintaining democratic political structures through some level of public education. America's Founders perpetuated this belief through a variety of public statements and political actions. Some even attempted to institutionalize public education (Hirschland and Steinmo, 2003; Jacoby, 2009; Rebell, 2018). For example, before falling prey to anti-federalist fears of excessive national government power, both Benjamin Franklin and James Madison tried to include several provisions for public education in the U.S. Constitution (Rebell, 2018, pp. 13-14).

Whereas indications exist that the Founders believed in general education that aimed at cultivating academic skill and proficiency in a variety of subject areas, especially reading and

writing, Rebell concludes that the predominant educational goal was decidedly civic in nature. The country's early leaders placed "greater emphasis on developing citizens who would protect and nurture the new democracy" (p.13). Of the Founders who were the most outspoken in their educational views, perhaps none was more eloquent and consistent than Thomas Jefferson (Carpenter, 2004). Throughout his career, Jefferson made the relationship between education and the vibrancy of democracy a centerpiece of his political agenda. Jefferson's advocacy of public education is evident in numerous public statements, policy proposals, and personal, political correspondences. Among the panoply of Jefferson's statements on the subject, it could be argued that his most basic description of the essential value of education in perpetuating democratic governance can be found in his letter to the Virginia legislature in January 1818. Writing in support of the founding of the University of Virginia, Jefferson covered extensive ideological ground, declaring unequivocally his belief that "well-directed education improves the morals, enlarges the minds, enlightens the councils, instructs the industry, and advances the power, the prosperity, and the happiness of the nation" (Henderson, 1890, p. 40).

At other points in his career, Jefferson provided more explicit exposition on the ways in which education enhances the vitality of democracy. Perhaps the most specific and famous explanation of Jefferson's views exists in his *Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge*, submitted to the Virginia legislature in 1779 (Boyd, 1950). In the opening section of the bill, Jefferson lays out the theoretical groundwork for his proposed structure of public education, stating his general belief that the greatest value of public education is found in a citizenry that is well-informed on the basics of democratic governance and is, therefore, equipped to both recognize the characteristics of tyranny and mobilize to prevent its manifestation. Jefferson further argued for the vital role of education in the creation of good public policy, noting that

educated citizens are as essential to the lawmaking process as those who are selected to create policy (p. 526).

From Jefferson forward, numerous political thinkers and policymakers, especially those who have helped to shape the scope and structure of American education, have reinforced the conviction that a well-educated populace is essential for the perpetuation of a democratic society. One of the most influential early American educators, Horace Mann, believed that education was crucial for preserving democratic governance primarily by offsetting the baser instincts of individuals who might be inclined to abuse the freedom, resulting from a societal embrace of aspirational democratic ideals. “If we maintain institutions, which bring us within the action of new and unheard-of powers, without taking any corresponding measures for the government of those powers, we shall perish by the very instruments prepared for our happiness” (Mann, 1855, p. 125). Mann further asserted that the responsibility for creating and maintaining sufficient educational institutions was incumbent upon the government and those who govern, further contending that “no man is worthy the honored name of a statesman, who does not include the highest practicable education of the people in all his plans of administration. . . . Unless he speaks, plans, labors, at all times and in all places, for the culture and edification of the whole people, he is not, he cannot be, an American statesman” (p. 162).

From around the time of the Civil War through the turn of the 20th century, ideological Progressives embraced and promoted the link between public and higher education and citizenship. Whether their efforts were nationally focused or state-based, Progressives devoted considerable attention to the educational aspects of political socialization, which they believed would enhance civic empowerment and expand political engagement (Dudley and Gitelson, 2003; Hirschland and Steinmo, 2003).

One of the leading Progressive voices of the time, and perhaps the most influential educator of the Progressive Era, was John Dewey. For Dewey (1916) education was essential to democracy as the mediating and moderating force for the personal and civic development of the individual within a democratic society. Drawing on what he believed to be the primary ideological contributors to widely held convictions about American democracy - Platonism, Classic Liberalism, and Communitarianism - Dewey promoted an educational vision whereby schools would operate as miniature democratic communities in which students would "be active participants in democratic processes rather than passive recipients of abstract information" (Rebell, 2018, p. 16). Within the microcosm of the educational community, Dewey further asserted that the highest ideals of American democracy could be realized to the benefit of individual members of society and the society as a whole. A truly democratic society, which by its very nature "makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms" and "secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life," must embrace an educational system that "gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder" (Dewey, 1916, p. 111).

By the closing decades of the 19th century, the link between education and civic action, championed by Jefferson, Mann, Dewey, and a host of other national leaders, gained a significant foothold as a fundamental purpose of American public education (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Hirschland and Steinmo, 2003, Meyer, 1967). Evidence of this can be seen in a variety of educational policies and initiatives established in the mid- to latter-half of the 1800s that garnered wide national support. Of these initiatives, the Common School Movement and the Land-Grant Act of 1862 merit special consideration. The establishment of the Common School

Movement, founded by Horace Mann in Massachusetts during the 1820s and widely-practiced nationally by the 1840s (De Lissovoy, Means, & Saltman, 2015; Rebell, 2018), signaled the country's interest in broad educational opportunities for young Americans, particularly as it related to civic education. Though the legacy of the Common School Movement is not without its critics, particularly as it relates to the treatment of Native Americans and the disabled (Taylor, 2010; Warder, 2015), the movement sought to "provide young people from disparate backgrounds with core civic values[6], thereby promoting political and social stability" (Anderson, Avery, Pederson, Smith, & Sullivan, 1997, p. 334). Similarly, the state-based push to create common educational space gained the support of the federal government, which passed the Land-Grant Act of 1862. Though aimed predominantly at colleges and universities, the law also benefitted primary and secondary public schools, demonstrating the federal government's interest in promoting the link between education and civic engagement (Hirschland and Steinmo, 2003; Jacoby, 2009).

As the 20th century approached, civic education had become so firmly established within the nation's educational systems that debates began to arise among educators about the character, the content, and the effectiveness of the various state-run civics curricula. These debates were fueled by a number of ideological, economic, labor, and nationalistic concerns, sparked by an influx of immigrants and growing industrialization (Anderson, et al., 1997; Evans, 2004). As the U.S. gained a greater presence on the world stage, issues of national identity started to grow in importance within educational and political circles. Many educators deemed civic education as in a state of disarray. School programs "were chaotic and not uniform, predictable, or comparable",

[6] Given the critique of the Common School Movement referenced in this section, it bears noting that the phrase "core civic values" is not without controversy. This phrase was retained as a part of the quote from Anderson, et al., but is not included to promote values that some may view as patriarchal and/or racist.

and were, according to some, “idiosyncratic and often whimsical” (Evans, 2004, p. 6). It should be noted that some scholars have viewed the lack of uniformity in civic education as the source of one important benefit, namely, that in most cases, the responsibility to teach civic responsibility was not segregated into a specific academic discipline but was “borne by the entire school curriculum” (Barth, 1984, p. 3). Nevertheless, the aforementioned concerns, coupled with a growing desire to prepare students for entrance into colleges and universities[7], led to national efforts to create a standard curriculum for secondary schools, including the burgeoning field of *social studies*. Of these efforts, the work of two groups merits a closer look because of their impact on civic education: The Committee of Ten and the Commission for the Reorganization of Secondary Education.

The Committee of Ten was appointed in 1892 by the National Education Association (NEA) to review a collection of curricula within the U.S. and make recommendations on high school curriculum as a whole in the interest of creating standardized curricular structures that could be applied nationally (Evans, 2004; Mackenzie, 1894). While civics education did not occupy much space in the committee’s report summary (Mackenzie, 1894), the larger report contained the work of each subcommittee that had been assigned different academic areas of study, including the work of the subcommittee tasked specifically with developing recommendations for social studies education (National Education Association, 1894). The Subcommittee on History, Civil Government, and Political Economy - commonly referred to as the History Ten (Evans, 2003; Hertzberg, 1981) - convened in Madison, Wisconsin in the closing days of 1892. The History Ten offered numerous recommendations; chief among them was a prescribed multiyear plan to expand the study of ancient, world, and American history, the latter

[7] Though this was a point of contention early on as reported in Mackenzie, 1894, p. 152.

of which would include the study of civil government. This course of study was to be applied "precisely the same for all, whether college bound or not" (Evans, 2004, p. 8). The committee further recommended that institutions of higher education adopt entrance exams in history, to match the prescribed educational structure more closely, and recommendations for "newer methods" of study, which included "inquiry, extensive use of comparison, informal presentations supplemented by student presentations in the advanced grades, individualized work, field trips, debates, audiovisual aids, [etc.]" (Hertzberg, 1981, p. 10). It is difficult to assess fully the impact of the Committee of Ten and their subcommittees, but in the area of social studies and civic education, an argument can be made that the product of the subcommittee's work had a profound impact on social studies education throughout the 20th century, and its impact may still be felt as the 21st century begins its third decade (Bohan, 2003).

In 1911, the NEA established The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) in large part to address societal shifts within the American populace and to position secondary education to impact a broader section of the country's youth, not just those preparing for college (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Kingsley, 1918). The civic nature of the commission's work was stated clearly, emphasizing the responsibility placed on secondary schools to fulfill their mission "so that young people may meet the needs of democracy" (Kingsley, 1918, Preface). The commission's report further described the purpose of democracy as the organization of society so that "each member may develop his personality primarily through activities designed for the well-being of his fellow members and of society as a whole" (p. 9)[8]. The chief accomplishment of the commission was the articulation of seven "cardinal

[8] Though John Dewey was not listed as a participant of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, an argument can be made that Dewey's influence – which Evans (2004) confirms was "behind the scenes" (p. 22) – can be seen in statements such as this.

principles" that were to serve as educational objectives for all levels of education within the U.S. In addition to educational aims directed at *health*; *command of fundamental processes* (a general description of basic academic skills like reading, writing, and math); *worthy home-membership* (wherein students developed individual qualities that contributed to the family unit from which the individual benefits); *vocation*; *worthy use of leisure*; and *ethical character*, the commission emphasized the importance of *civic education*.

According to the commission, civic education "should develop in the individual those qualities whereby he will act well his part as a member of neighborhood, town or city, State, and Nation, and give him a basis for understanding international problems" (p. 13). The commission further concluded that civics education was the dominant aim of the social studies, which included the subjects of geography, history, civics, and economics, though "all subjects should contribute to good citizenship" (p. 14). Toward that end, the commission recommended the creation of a new course as a part of the larger social studies curriculum - Problems of Democracy - which, according to Evans (2004), represented "one of the first conscious attempts at curricular fusion" wherein the various subjects within social studies would be organized around social problems, no one social science would be emphasized over the others, and "course content would be selected on the grounds of student interest and importance to society" (p. 26).

When considering the lasting impact of the CRSE recommendations in this brief historical survey of civic education in the U.S., it may be argued that the commission's work helped move civic education into the spotlight of American education. While representing the crowning achievement of the Progressive Movement (Bohan, 2003), the debates that occurred during the 1920s and 1930s between supporters and critics of the CRSE report helped to shape social studies instruction for decades. Even as educators and politicians argued over the preferred

structure of social studies curriculum, the interests of civic education, and its subsequent impact on civic engagement, were never far from view (Evans, 2004).

While the numerous committees, commissions, and associations created to address civic education within the U.S. were interested in more collaboration between common schools and institutions of higher learning, their main focus was common education. Efforts to incorporate institutions of higher education in civic education did not increase by any sizable measure until the post-World War II era. Furthermore, these efforts were driven more by politicians than by educators. Some conclude, however, that these initiatives reflected an important shift in thinking about higher education and its importance to civic engagement. Three national initiatives - the G.I. Bill in 1944 (officially titled the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, which included grants to cover the costs of college/university and trade school enrollment ["G.I. Bill", 2010]), the National Science Foundation in 1950, and the National Defense Education Act of 1958 - illustrated the growing consensus that education - especially *civic* education - in the U.S. should be a cooperative, if not a coordinated, effort between all educational levels (Boyer, 1994; Jacoby, 2009).

The inclusion of higher education in the overall strategy for teaching civic awareness was no doubt spurred on by a variety of influences. Boyer (1994) suggests that the federal government saw higher education as vital to national security, especially following the launch of *Sputnik* by the Soviet Union in 1958 (p. A48). It would be difficult to deny that the inclusion of higher education in more cooperative civic learning strategies was also encouraged by economic forces, particularly as the U.S. economy reached new heights in the post-war era (Boyer, 1994; Dalton, 2016). But one trend may have tipped the scales toward inclusion more than others:

growing access to a college/university education by a broader cross-section of American high school graduates (Arum and Roksa, 2011; Hout, 1996; Trow, 1970).

As referenced earlier, the mounting evidence of civic disengagement, particularly among the nation's youth, that arose during the closing decades of the 20th century gained the attention of educators at all levels (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985; Boyer, 1994; Morrill, 1982; Putman, 1995). Within the area of secondary education, resulting from compromises between traditional and pragmatic curricular approaches that reflected varying political agendas and multicultural frameworks (Anderson, et al., 1997; Bellah, et al., 1985; Hirsch, et al., 1988; Schlesinger, 1998; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004[9]), efforts were made to address the need for a greater concentration on civic education through the creation of a "common core of cultural information" (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 1988, p. 127).

While attempts to deepen the commitment of the nation's secondary schools to the cause of civic education continued, endeavors to align higher education more closely with strategies for civic education in secondary schools remained problematic for a variety of reasons. Perhaps chief among these were the structural challenges encountered when efforts were made to coordinate national concerns with the aims of state and local educational institutions. For example, Bowles and Gintis (1976) pointed to residual forces of stratification within secondary education that may have had a lingering effect in obstructing efforts to synchronize secondary and higher educational aims of civic instruction. Despite these challenges, institutions of higher learning were not deaf to increased warnings that colleges and universities were being viewed "as disconnected from social concerns and unresponsive to public needs," thereby fulfilling the caution expressed decades earlier by Saul Alinsky who asserted that "the word 'academic' [was

[9] It should be noted that Hirsch, et al., and Schlesinger detail their own critiques of these efforts while outlining the development of these educational achievements.

becoming] synonymous with irrelevant" (Hollander, Saltmarsh, & Zlotkowski, 2002, p. 33 - quoting Alinsky, 1946).

During the 1980s into the early 1990s, college and university faculty members, administrators, and students, began organizing to promote civic action and to integrate civic engagement within the collegiate experience, which included core curriculum and extracurricular interests. Two key examples of these initiatives can be seen in the creation of Campus Connect, formed in 1985 by college and university presidents seeking to facilitate “education in service of civic responsibility” (Jacoby, 2009, p. 12) through academic programs aimed at encompassing “both institutional engagement with communities and educating students for responsible citizenship” (p. 15); and the student-founded organization, Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), created in 1984 with the purpose of creating and capitalizing on civic engagement opportunities for students, with the collateral hope of rebutting the growing perception that students of the so-called “me generation” were intensely self-centered and disinterested in issues of social justice and civic action (Hollander, et al., 2002; Jacoby, 2009).

During this time, institutions of higher education also actively supported and utilized the resources offered through federal programs created in the wake of the passage of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 respectively (see previous discussion), including the Commission on National and Community Service, which provided resources for civic engagement education within secondary and post-secondary schools nationally, and the Corporation for National and Community Service that administered several programs (such as Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, USA Freedom Corps, and Learn and Serve America) designed to mobilize Americans, especially young Americans, into public service at various levels of engagement (Jacoby, 2009). It should be noted that one of the

most enduring effects of these initiatives was the rise of *service-learning* that was aimed at combining "service with academic content and reflection" as a way of "developing an understanding of the root causes of social problems and where to begin to find solutions" (Jacoby, 2009, p. 13).

As was previously noted, the concerted governmental and educational efforts of the latter 20th century to increase civic engagement seemed to be paying dividends among school- and college-aged youth as the nation entered the 21st century. Research indicated notable increases in civic action especially in the areas of community volunteer work and online political voice (see previous discussion). Additionally, test scores of the nation's secondary students indicated increased levels of sustained literacy in the area of American civics. By the end of the 1990s, reports by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed that high school seniors scoring at or above a basic level of achievement reached 65%, with 26% of the student sample scoring at or above a proficient level. This trend continued through the first few years of the 2000s as civics scores of high school seniors at or above basic achievement reached a level of 66%, with 27% of those analyzed achieving at or above proficient scores (NAEP, 2010).

Despite these indicators of progress, concerns about trends in civic disengagement remained high among college and university educators and researchers. In response to calls for greater understanding of the formative forces at work in fostering greater civic engagement (especially in the area of political socialization), the American Political Science Association (APSA) created a standing committee on Civic Education and Engagement in 2002. The committee endeavored (and continues to work) to marry theory and practice by creating research-based resources that assist college and university campuses in promoting the highest quality of civic education (APSA, 2018; Dudley and Gitelson, 2003).

In the early 2000s, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) increased its traditionally high interest in civic education by sponsoring studies designed to provide in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of the nation's civic learning strategies. Perhaps most notable of these studies was *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (Musil, 2012) that set out "to assess the status and vibrancy of civic learning in colleges and universities and to recommend how to animate education for democracy as a twenty-first-century outcome of college" (CLDE, 2016, p. 1). Relying on much of the data previously explored and new research conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, *Crucible* sought to mobilize academia toward more active and aggressive strategies for stemming the tide of civic disengagement within the country. Among its many recommendations, the report suggested five essential actions: 1) reclaim and reinvest in the fundamental civic and democratic mission of higher educations; 2) enlarge the current national narrative that erases civic aims and civic literacy as main educational priorities; 3) advance a contemporary, comprehensive framework for civic learning - embracing U.S. and global interdependence; 4) capitalize upon the interdependent responsibilities of K-12 and higher education to advance greater civic consciousness; and 5) expand the number of robust, generative civic partnerships and alliances, locally, nationally, and globally that empower civic action and address common problems (Musil, 2012, p. 13). The report tied these recommendations into a challenge for college and university campuses to intentionally foster a *civic ethos*, prioritize *civic literacy*, practice *civic inquiry*, and advance *civic action* (p. 14). The publication of the *Crucible* report sparked the creation of numerous organizations, networks, foundations, and initiatives, spearheaded by the AACU, all aimed at deeper examination of civic education and the increased availability of

resources designed to promote and facilitate effective civics learning among the nation's college-aged students[10].

Beyond theoretical and philosophical assertions about education's relationship to high percentages of civic participation, empirical research also offers evidence that an educated citizenry, particularly those with some college-level experience, is consistently the most politically active. This assertion is born out in numerous studies conducted during the first decade of the 21st century. Using data gathered by the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), which examined levels of political action by a large number of students who were eighth graders in 1988 through 2000 when most respondents were roughly 26-years-old, Lopez and Brown (2006) noticed measurably higher levels of political participation among those who had achieved certificates or degrees from either two-year or four-year colleges/universities. This trend was observed specifically in the areas of volunteering (which is consistent with research data previously considered) and voting, where a stark contrast can be seen between respondents who had no collegiate achievements (volunteered in the previous year: aggregate 24%; voted in previous general election: aggregate 35%) and those with a college certificate or a degree (volunteered in the previous year: aggregate 38%; voted in the previous general election: aggregate 49%). Many of these same conclusions are supported by Lopez and Elrod (2006), who mined the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Survey (B&B 2000/2001) sponsored by the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) for evidence of the lasting effects of collegiate experiences on civic engagement. One notable example from their analysis involves the percentage of college/university graduates from the class of 2000 who voted in the 2000 presidential election, which, based on participant responses, averaged to 77%.

[10] See CLDE, 2016; and Jacoby, 2009 for more detailed lists and descriptions of these various entities.

Other studies added further dimensions to the scholarly understanding of the impact higher education has on civic participation. On the issue of how students perceived the effectiveness of political activism, Sax (2000, 2004) identified a marked increase in positive responses among college/university graduates who expressed a belief that positive change could be achieved through political action.[11] When examining the impact of more specific aspects of the collegiate experience, Hillygus (2005) found that college graduates whose curricular disciplines required and fostered high verbal skills demonstrated higher levels of political activity than their classmates who worked in disciplines with lower verbal skill demands. In his analysis of survey data from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, Galston (2007) observed consistently higher rates of political participation among college/university graduates than their non-college educated counterparts, especially when students belonged to student-led civic action groups during their collegiate careers. Additionally, Lopez and Kiesa (2009) noted large disparities in the percentages of participation by college graduates compared to those with no collegiate experience in their analysis of a wide-range of measurements observed within the categories of civic activities (e.g., community problem-solving, volunteering, charity fundraising), electoral activities (e.g., regular voting habits, campaign volunteering, candidate donations), and political voice activities (e.g., communications with elected officials, petition signing, demonstrations). Consistently, Lopez and Kiesa found levels of participation by U.S. collegians ranging between the mid-20s to upper-40s throughout the three main categories of engagement observed. Regularly, the level of college-educated citizen participation was double and sometimes triple the percentages of participation of noncollege-educated Americans.

[11] Sax also observed that the attitudinal improvements of these students were often influenced by their collegiate peer groups.

The brief survey of research conducted on the subject of education's influence on increased civic knowledge, consciousness, and engagement considered in the previous section, as well as other research that was not discussed (Kiesa, et al., 2007; Mayer, 2011; Nie and Hillygus, 2001; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Persson, 2013 - who explores the causal connection between higher education and increased civic engagement; Pryor, et al., 2010) seem to confirm the stated argument that framed Galston's (2007) research analysis. "Civic knowledge directly affects civic competence, character, and conduct" (p. 624). Given the overwhelming evidence supporting the notion that all levels of education, especially at the highest levels, contribute greatly to increased civic knowledge, Galston's recommendation may seem basic but apt: "If we want to revitalize and sustain democratic citizenship, working to raise levels of civic knowledge and information would be one effective strategy, and a sensible place to begin" (p. 624). If that is true, then it is difficult to argue against the belief that education is vital in promoting democracy and democratic societies.

In a broad sense, the foregoing discussion affirms the conclusion that the education of the American public and increased levels of civic consciousness and engagement are intertwined. Stated simply, history, tradition, and experience support the belief that education, especially higher education, plays an invaluable role in promoting and perpetuating democratic governance through civic engagement. If civic education is indeed linked to higher levels of individual investment in the civic life of society, the characteristics, and content of civic education, particularly as it relates to the focus of this study, deserve a closer look.

Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Collegiate Public Sector Career Choices

The picture of American civic education, especially at the collegiate level, is multi-dimensional. Academic programs and curricular designs geared toward civic education appear in

a variety of forms with numerous instructional goals due in no small part to the multiplicity of dimensions that frame the definition of *civic engagement*. Since this study is focused on a specific academic design of civic education, namely collegiate curriculum and programming aimed at promoting and fostering *public sector career* (PSC) choices, brief consideration of the literature focused on higher educational strategies for promoting *civic engagement* will be provided at the end of this chapter.

In the interest of clarity, consideration needs to be given first to the terminology used in this study's examination of collegiate choices of public sector careers. In a general sense, references to the *public sector* could easily be viewed as a sub-category within the field of *public service*. Generally-speaking, the term *public service* could be defined broadly as any activity - whether individual or corporate - that fits the description of "public leadership and management" (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004, p. 10). While this broad characterization certainly pertains to the focus of this study, it should be acknowledged that volunteer work within public service agencies fits this description of public service as well. Beyond general considerations of civic engagement through public service, however, this study looks at those who have chosen a professional pathway within the public sector, which includes traditional governmental institutions and services, as well as private-public partnerships such as charitable, apolitical nonprofit organizations.[12]

The central argument of the opening sections of this chapter has been that civic engagement is vital for ensuring the survival of democratic societies, and that one of the most essential ways of promoting civic engagement is through education. Yet, as observed by Checkoway and Aldana (2013), the term, *civic engagement* "is used freely to refer to a wide

[12] Please see below for a more in-depth look at the qualifications for classifying an institution, organization, agency, or other kinds of enterprises as belonging to the public sector.

variety of phenomena, usually without definition" and all the activity that flies under the flag of *civic engagement*, as well as its scholarship "would benefit from clarity and differentiation among its forms, and the educational practices that promote it" (p. 1894). To better analyze the dynamics of public sector education, the concept of *civic engagement* would be well-served by a more cohesive definition. As Checkoway and Aldana observe, greater emphasis on civic engagement through education over the past 100 years has produced numerous versions of the concept of *civic engagement*. A brief exploration of some of the most influential contributors to the concept of *civic engagement* may prove instructive for piecing together a comprehensive and, hopefully, inclusive understanding of the concept.

For some, *civic engagement* is a general concept that does not denote *a priori* considerations of specific actions. This characteristic is seen in Bellah, et al. (1996) where civic engagement is viewed simply as "a concern for the common good, a belief that we are all members of the same body" whereby a variety of public actions "contribute to the good of the larger society" as well as the good of a society's individual members (p. xxxi). Keeping with this generalized conception of civic engagement, but offering a more philosophical view, Morrill (1982) envisions civic engagement as essential democratic discourse centered on a "sea of values" that lie at the heart of democracy: "participation, responsibility, respect for self and others, equality, freedom, justice, tolerance, and trust" (p. 368).[13] This same idea was echoed by Stelljes (2014) in his critique of higher education's efforts to promote civic engagement, asserting that civic engagement cannot be divorced from the active pursuit of these "democratic virtues" and that civic education fails in its attempts to instruct for civic engagement when that pursuit is directed elsewhere (2014, November 10).

[13] See Locklin and Posman, 2016 for analysis of Morrill's vision about education and its role in promoting democratic citizenship

In some cases, civic engagement is defined by concepts of *citizenship* that are related but often incongruous. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) observe the fracturing of consensus on the subject of citizenship education, stating:

> For some, a commitment to democracy is a promise to protect liberal notions of freedom, while for others democracy is primarily about equality or equality of opportunity. For some, civil society is the key, while for others, free markets are the great hope for a democratic society. For some, good citizens in a democracy volunteer, while for others they take active parts in political processes by voting, protesting, and working on political campaigns (p. 241).

The authors outline three basic forms (referred to by the authors as "visions" - p. 242) of citizenship education resulting from their research analysis: 1) the *personally-responsible citizen* - who operates from an assumption that personal character and integrity are key to the improvement of society; 2) the *participatory citizen* - who believes that individual participation primarily through more institutional means (e.g., assuming leadership positions, serving on community-oriented organizations) is vital for community problem-solving and improvement; and 3) the *justice-oriented citizen* - who believes accountability of public officials and organized challenges to unjust systems and structures are key to the betterment of society (p. 242). While acknowledging the potential for agreement between these differing visions of citizenship, Westheimer and Kahne remain skeptical, outlining what they see as persistent conflicts that arise between these citizenship visions, further illustrating the complex character of civic engagement and the challenges faced by educators as they approach academic designs for civic education.

An attempt to piece together a more cohesive definition of the concept led Adler and Goggin (2005) to explore and identify numerous characteristics that have served as the primary focus of civic engagement definitions used most commonly within the literature. The authors note that the most common conceptions view civic engagement as: 1) community service; 2) collective action; 3) political involvement; and/or 4) social change. Each of these dynamics are

given priority by numerous definitions "with different individuals and groups emphasizing different aspects of the term" (p. 240). Adler and Goggin also chart the scope of civic activities most often included in the concept of civic engagement, ranging from *individual action* (informal and private) to *collective action* (formal and public). The authors conclude their exploration of the concept's meaning and its usage by offering the following summary of civic engagement: "Civic engagement describes how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future" (p. 241).

One final conception of civic engagement merits consideration due in no small part to its value for civic educational designs. While traveling some of the same terrain as Adler and Goggin, Jacoby (2009) seeks to incorporate several dynamics of civic engagement in pursuit of a functional framework for the concept's use. Leaning heavily on a definition of civic engagement offered by the Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership (2007), Jacoby offers the following working definition of civic engagement:

> Civic engagement is acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one's communities. This includes a wide range of activities, including developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good. Civic engagement encompasses the notions of global citizenship and interdependence. Through civic engagement, individuals—as citizens of their communities, their nations, and the world—are empowered as agents of positive social change for a better world (p. 9).
>
> Civic engagement involves one or more of the following: 1) Learning from others, self, and environment to develop informed perspectives on social issues; 2) Recognizing and appreciating human diversity and commonality; 3) Behaving, and working through controversy, with civility[14]; 4) Taking an active role in the political process; 5) Participating actively in public life, public problem solving, and community service; 6) Assuming leadership and membership roles in

[14] I acknowledge that the use of the term, "civility" in this quote may raise concerns, especially in light of social criticism and discourse, since it has been and remains a tool of oppression. In that way, civility is code for acceptable behavior according to dominant systemic norms. It is my opinion that Jacoby is using the term in a conventional sense to communicate interactions based on mutual respect.

> organizations; 7) Developing empathy, ethics, values, and sense of social responsibility; and 8) Promoting social justice locally and globally[15] (Jacoby, 2014, pp. 5-7).

Though in many ways these explorations of the concept of civic engagement resemble the proverb of the blind men describing an elephant, taken together these descriptions help to provide a better understanding of the multifaceted nature of civic engagement. As it pertains to this study, the various aspects of the concept highlighted in this discussion serve to establish a basic articulation of civic engagement that will be examined through the lens of collegiate PSC choices. Additionally, the broader concept helps illuminate our understanding of individual civic awareness and sensibilities, as well as providing informed guidance for further consideration of the means by which collegiate instruction may be designed for promoting PSC choices and educational preparation.

Before proceeding, it seems important to clarify the philosophical positionality of the *civic engagement* concept within this study. Given the assertion that civic engagement, in its most basic form, involves members of a society interacting with and bringing influence to bear on the different political mechanisms and organizational dynamics of governance and community life,[16] an argument could be made that these types of actions do not automatically proceed from a commitment to democracy. Certainly, examples of public ascent to authoritarian regimes support this argument. Over the past few years, we have seen growing popular support for authoritarian regimes, even among democratic nations like Turkey, India, Venezuela, and Hungary ("Authoritarianism and nationalism on the rise", 2021; Foa and Mounk, 2016; Kenyon, 2014; Pascale, 2019; Repucci and Slipowitz, 2021). Given the U.S. locale and focus of this

[15] Jacoby used bullet points in her identification of each characteristic. I chose to number them for ease of reading and not to indicate stratification.
[16] I am indebted to Nancy Bermeo's (2003) discussion of *civil society* for this description.

study, all references below to *civic engagement*, and its political applications, refer to *democratic* governance,[17] with its reliance on the principles of *popular sovereignty* and an engaged citizenry.

The Research Context of the Study

The foregoing survey of civic education and its specific relationship to civic engagement within the United States provides the backdrop against which this study was conducted. As a form of civic education that seeks to increase civic engagement through professional avenues, public service career academic programming reflects many of the characterizations reviewed above. Instructional designs aimed at promoting public sector careers, including student preparation and facilitation of individual entrance into the public sector, offer a practical pathway for increasing civic engagement among college/university graduates in both ideological and pragmatic ways. The creation of such collegiate programming is reliant, however, on a broader understanding of the motivational factors that lead college and university graduates into the public sector professionally. This study has been designed with that goal in mind, asking simply: *What motivates college/university students to select and enter careers in public service?*

Essential for accomplishing this research goal are the findings that were gleaned from the perspectives of interview respondents who were each active public service practitioners as they reflected on their respective journeys into professional public service. The respondents' accounts began at the origin of their choosing, stretching through their collegiate experiences and early professional opportunities up to their present public service roles. Our research is conversant with and contributes to scholarship in two related fields of study: 1) *Public Service Motivation* (PSM); and 2) college undergraduate public service curriculum and programming. A brief consideration of the literature in both arenas will clarify the relationship of this study to the

[17] This decision is not ignorant of nor blind to the recent growing receptivity toward authoritarianism within the U.S. (Giroux, 2006; 2019; MacWilliams, 2020; Pascale, 2019).

research in both fields and identify ways our research may contribute to the conversation surrounding the concept of public service as civic engagement.

Public Service Motivation Research

Starting with a broad consideration of *public service* as "an attitude, a sense of duty - even a public morality" that is embraced as "basic to democratic society" and manifested through active participation in a variety of organizational and institutional agencies (Staats, 1988, p. 601), the field of PSM research focuses on the nature and impact of PSM on professional public service and the development of PSM at work in public sector professionals, particularly in comparison to their private sector counterparts.

While tracing its roots to organizational management and public administration scholarship in the 1950s and 1960s, the body of PSM scholarship experienced a noticeable expansion beginning in the early 1990s and has grown significantly over the past three decades.[18] Subsequently, the expanded borders of PSM research have led to modifications in how PSM is defined and examined. Initially, some of the field's leading voices defined PSM as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368). Over time, the meaning of PSM was further expanded as the scope of research moved beyond the U.S. to encompass civil servants and public institutions around the globe. The concept was also enriched by the incorporation of other fields of study (e.g., economics, behavioral psychology, and organizational management) and additional research contributors (e.g., public sector managers,

[18] It should be noted that, within PSM literature, Rainey (1982) is widely-credited with providing one of the first theoretical conceptions and empirical tests of PSM (e.g., Brewer & Selden, 1998; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Perry & Wise, 1990; Rayner, et al., 2011; Ritz, 2011; Wright, et al., 2016) though Rainey references and displays a reliance on the scholarship of Buchanan, 1975; Downs, 1967; and Kilpatrick, et al., 1964.

and policymakers). While the concept of PSM acquired greater nuance, the concept's assorted definitions remained connected to the original construct.

Despite the definitional revisions offered by a variety of scholars, concerns remained that the precepts of the definition may not be internationally useful, posing a threat to the continuity of the concept within the field (Vandenabeele, 2011). Accordingly, Vandenabeele (2007) suggested the concept be further defined as "the belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate" (p. 547). Though the revised definition lacks the syntactical fluidity of some its forerunners, Vandenabeele's definition has gained wide acceptance within the field (Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise, 2010; Ripoll, 2019; Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann, 2016; Ritz and Waldner, 2011; Word and Park, 2015) due in large part to its accessibility as a construct that encompasses the multi-faceted nature of the PSM concept.[19] Beyond recognizing, defining, and measuring PSM, subsequent researchers have sought to provide greater clarity to the concept. Due to their seminal status within the literature and their application to this study, two specific works deserve further consideration. One of the first attempts to provide a multi-dimensional conception of PSM was authored by Perry (1996), who tested six areas that were perceived operational aspects of individual service interest: 1) attraction to public policymaking; 2) commitment to the public interest; 3) social justice; 4) civic duty; 5) compassion; and 6) self-sacrifice (pp. 6-7). Perry's analysis of his findings led to a structural modification of his initial proposal and yielded a measurement scale that was based on four of his initial six interest areas: public policymaking, public interest, compassion, and self-

[19] As an increasing number of PSM scholars sought to redefine PSM, the original authors posited their own definitional revision, describing PSM as: "a particular form of altruism or prosocial motivation that is animated by specific dispositions and values arising from public institutions and missions" (Perry, Hondeghem, & Wise, 2010, p. 682).

sacrifice (pp. 20-21). The scale established by Perry, especially the four service values upon which the scale was based, has become the benchmark for PSM measurement within the literature as confirmed by Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann (2016) in their comprehensive review of PSM literature. According to these authors, only Perry and Wise (1990) have been cited by researchers more than Perry's 1996 work (pp. 417-418).

Adding to the scope of Perry's (1996) four-dimensional PSM measurement scale, Brewer, Selden, and Facer (2000) conducted a mixed methods study that tested the responses of 69 public servants (from a variety of public institutions, agencies, and organizations) to 40 opinion statements related to PSM convictions. Based on their findings, the authors created four profiles of public sector workers based on specific PSM characteristics: 1) Samaritans - individuals who view themselves as "guardians of the underprivileged," strongly motivated to help others and moved emotionally when they observe others in distress (pp. 258-259); 2) Communitarians - the group of individuals "motivated and stirred by sentiments of civic duty and public service" who also believe in the strong connection between citizens and the individuals who serve them (p. 259); 3) Patriots - individuals who "act for causes much bigger than themselves, protecting, advocating, and working for the good of the public" (pp. 259-260); and 4) Humanitarians - individuals who exhibit a strong sense of social justice and a commitment to specific avenues of public service that are linked to public causes and programs aimed at making a fair society (p. 260). Though numerous researchers (e.g., Bright, 2013; Coursey and Pandey, 2007; Kim and Vandenabeele, 2010; Kim, et al., 2013; Moynihan and Pandey, 2007b; Naff and Crum, 1999; Perry, 2000, Vandenabeele, 2008; and 2011) have built on and expanded the work of Perry (1996) and Brewer, Selden, and Facer (2000), the findings and

conclusions of the two studies offer important theoretical insights that are instructive for analyzing the findings of this study.

Within PSM research, significant theoretical focus has centered on the ethical implications of the concept itself. Borrowing from ancient and modern philosophers, a key aspect of PSM theory is the assertion that individuals who are motivated for public service and subsequently assume responsibilities within public service institutions manifest ethical attitudes and behavior that are based on intrinsic values directed toward the public interest (Bozeman, 2007; Horton, 2008; O'Toole, 2006). Generally, these intrinsic values include "commitment, accountability, integrity, impartiality, organizational citizenship behavior, and some notion of the public interest, distinct from private interests" (Rayner, et al., 2011, p. 27).

As researchers began developing the concept of a public service ethic, one of the first challenges PSM scholars faced was in defining the concept of *public interest* as the primary objective of a service ethic. Even before PSM was posited as a comprehensive theory, organizational management and administration researchers struggled with the ethical connotations related to *public interest*, especially considering the multiple perspectives on the concept (Buchanan, 1975; Downs, 1967; Rainey, 1982). Accordingly, some early PSM researchers urged and modeled cautious flexibility when articulating the relationship between the public interest and a public service ethic (Perry and Wise, 1990; Brewer and Selden, 1998; Gabris and Simo, 1995; Wittmer, 1991). Relative scholarly adherence to these cautions notwithstanding, numerous researchers have explored, theorized about, and provided evidence of an operational service ethic that guides the prosocial actions of public workers, further distinguishing them from many within the private sector (Brewer and Selden, 1998; Brewer, et

al., 2000; Caillier, 2015; Choi, 2004; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2006; Perry, 1996; 2000; Stazyk and Davis, 2015; Wittmer, 1991; Wright, et al., 2016).

In recent years, researchers have cast a more critical eye toward the concept of a public service ethic. While acknowledging the prevalence of data suggesting a positive relationship between PSM and service ethics, some PSM scholars have sought to delineate and examine different dimensions of the service ethic. Echoing the caution of early PSM researchers (noted above), these recent scholars have focused on and have called for more complex conceptions of the *service ethic*. The resulting scholarship suggests that the ethical character of PSM may not be as straightforward and positive as scholars once presumed, especially when considering how the quality of "the good" is defined and applied to the *common good* ideal. Since their work is still relatively fresh, these scholars emphasize the need for current and future scholars to account for the multiple theoretical dynamics involved in and the behavioral outcomes that can be linked to a public service ethic (Christensen and Wright, 2018; Esteve, et al., 2016; Ripoll, 2019; Schott and Ritz, 2018).

One final element of the service ethic conversation has emerged from scholarship focused on the most widely researched PSM concept (Ritz, et al., 2016), namely, the *antecedents* of PSM. Antecedent research has sought to understand the diverse formative, if not transformative, influences that contribute to higher levels of public concern among individuals within the public sector.[20] In terms of antecedent research related to the public service ethic, scholars have found evidence that a personal service ethic is forged through a combination of external influences and internal processes. For numerous PSM scholars, a public service ethic is the domain of institutions (e.g., familial, societal, and educational) and organizations that promote public values

[20] Other applications of PSM antecedent research will be considered below.

aimed at serving the common good. At some point in their development, individuals with high PSM have internalized prosocial values and translated them into an ethical code of conduct that is deeply personal and motivates them to abide by, reinforce, and perpetuate these prosocial values within the institutional and organizational structures to which they belong (Brewer and Selden, 1998; Choi, 2004; Maesschalck, et al., 2008; Perry, 2000; Perry and Vandenabeele, 2008; Perry and Wise, 1990; Ripoll, 2019; Stazyk and Davis, 2015; Wright, et al., 2016). Though this study does not attempt to address the issue of ethical formation in depth nor engage in a philosophical examination of ethics theory, the question of ethical formation is relevant to and instructive for our findings.

Even though PSM theory has captured the attention of researchers in other disciplines,[21] PSM scholarship remains predominantly focused on the concept's significance and applicability for the field of public administration (Perry and Vandenabeele, 2015). Accordingly, many of the lines of inquiry pursued by PSM researchers have been shaped by public administration priorities and concerns. While this study gives greater attention to the educational applications of PSM as opposed to its institutional and organizational relevance, several studies with professional aims offer findings with which this study is conversant.

One group of studies with connections to our research centered on relationships between public service workers and the organizations for which they work. Consistently, PSM scholars have found positive relationships between individual PSM and job satisfaction, individual performance, organizational commitment, and organizational effectiveness (Brewer and Selden, 2000; Crewson, 1997; Kim, 2005; Moynihan and Pandey, 2010; Naff and Crum, 1999; Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999; Ritz, Vandenabeele, and Vogel, 2021).

[21] As noted previously, this includes economics, behavioral psychology, and organizational management.

A related group of studies have explored the relationship between PSM and the recruitment and incentivization of public service workers. On the topic of recruitment, several researchers have explored the connection between PSM and job choice, specifically testing the hypothesis of Perry and Wise (1990) that "the greater an individual's public service motivation, the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization" (p. 370). Many of these studies borrow from the work of Schneider (1987), who argued that respective organizational cultures are largely determined by the individuals who choose to work for them and that his proposed *attraction-selection-attrition* model may help managerial leaders find and recruit workers who share their organizational values and missions. In keeping with Schneider's theory, PSM researchers have affirmed the high probability that individuals with high PSM will choose and establish long-term careers within the public sector, specifically public *service*, as long as their work responsibilities and the culture of the organization allow them the greatest potential to maximize their public service aspirations (Besley and Ghatak, 2005; Bright, 2013; 2021; Christensen and Wright, 2011; Clerkin and Coggburn, 2012; Dur and Zoutenbier, 2014; Gould-Williams, Mostafa, and Bottomley, 2015; Leisink and Steijn, 2008; Ritz and Waldner, 2011; Wright and Pandey, 2008).

A second group of researchers have examined public servant reward preferences that not only offer insights into the service interests of potential and current public workers but may also inform organizational incentivization strategies. Most of the studies conducted confirm the longstanding assertion (Perry and Wise, 1990) that public servants with high PSM place greater importance on intrinsic[22] rather than extrinsic, specifically monetary, rewards (Andersen, et al.,

[22] Clerkin and Coggburn (2012) list "doing important work" and "having the opportunity to serve society" as the most prevalent intrinsic motivators (pp. 213-214).

2012; Bright, 2009; Clerkin and Coggburn, 2012; Crewson, 1995; Frank and Lewis, 2004; Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz, Massey, Jr., and Brown, 1998; Rainey, 1982; Wittmer, 1991).

As previously noted, PSM researchers have focused extensively on the *antecedents* of PSM as part of their broader effort to better conceptualize PSM theory and explore the depths of its impact on the professional lives of public servants. Among the numerous antecedents examined, most attention has been paid to the gender, age, and education of participants (Ritz, et al., 2016, p. 419). Given the aims of this study, specific consideration was given to research that explored the influence of education on individual levels of PSM.

In a general sense, PSM scholarship aligns with the studies of other political scientists who have explored the connections between higher education and civic engagement. These studies have consistently found that higher levels of education tend to lead to greater political and civic participation, especially in terms of higher voting rates, greater involvement in community service, and active engagement in traditional and/or institutional political processes (Galston, 2007; Hillygus, 2005; Kam & Palmer, 2008; Lott, et al., 2013; Nie & Hillygus, 2001; Verba, Burns, & Scholzman, 2003). Similarly, PSM researchers who have focused on the links between civic education and civic engagement through public service have repeatedly identified a positive relationship between the development of personal public service motivation and higher levels of education (Adams, 2000; Bright, 2005; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Lewis and Frank, 2002; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007a; Pandey & Stazyk, 2008; Perry, 1997; Vandenabeele, 2011).

While the various dimensions and dynamics of both arenas of PSM scholarship have received considerable attention in the past three decades, certain questions remain that this study's findings can address. First, as a qualitative study, our research offers a multi-dimensional

portrait of individual PSM. As the previous survey of PSM literature indicates, the body of PSM research has produced significant findings that point toward the presence of heightened public service sensibilities among individuals who work within the public arena. However, much of this research has been overwhelmingly quantitative in method, which, according to Perry and Vandenabeele (2015), "has left us with a dearth of direct, formal studies of the phenomena" (p. 696). Despite the volumes of data that have been generated within the field, room exists for qualitative studies such as this one that explore, seek to describe, and contribute explanatory knowledge to the varying dimensions of PSM. This conclusion has been echoed in recent years by researchers within the field who have gradually acknowledged the need for increased qualitative PSM scholarship. For example, as of 2016, only 32 strictly qualitative studies were conducted within the field (Ritz, et al., 2016).[23] Though more qualitative studies have been conducted in the intervening years (e.g., Andersen, et al., 2018; Haider, et al., 2019; Mitchell and Rost-Banik, 2019; Ospina, et al., 2018; and Schott, et al., 2019), the relatively low number of qualitative studies confirms the assessment of Perry and Vandenabeele (2015) who identified "a need to develop a more robust body of qualitative evidence about the nature of the motives of public servants" that will help "remedy [the] deficiency in our knowledge base" (p. 696).

Using a qualitative approach, this study offers insights that may offset some the deficiencies to which Perry and Vandenabeele refer. While noticeably smaller in scope than large-*N* studies, the depth of qualitative research conducted in this study offers perspectives on PSM that are not available through strict quantitative modeling. Though the ultimate application of this data is more narrowly focused on educational strategies and academic designs, this study casts a wider investigative net, yielding observational data with a variety of applications for PSM

[23] Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann (2016) note that 15 mixed methods studies could also be added to that list.

research. By concentrating primarily on the developmental journey of public servants, this study contributes insights that offer a more nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to the formation and activation of an individual's public service motivation and the impact of PSM on individual public service choices and professional performance.

The findings of this study also apply to two areas of PSM scholarship that researchers have identified as under-researched: 1) the nonprofit sector; and 2) studies on the relationship between PSM and an individual's personality/identity. As it pertains to nonprofit sector research, some PSM scholars within the past decade have criticized the field for focusing almost exclusively on the contrasts between the public and the private sectors. As part of a general observation that public service can be seen in numerous contexts, these scholars point toward the lack of research that includes individuals and organizations from the nonprofit sector (Brewer, 2011; Clerkin and Coggburn, 2012; Ng and Johnson, 2020; Rose, 2013). According to these scholars, neglecting this area of study robs the field of valuable information that can provide greater depth to the PSM concept. As noted below, our study included individuals who held positions in charitable and educational nonprofits, which provides a glimpse into this neglected section of professional public service.

In similar fashion, PSM scholars have observed the need for research that considers the influence an individual's personality and/or self-identity plays in the formation and activation of individual PSM (Schott, et al., 2015; Van Witteloostuijn, et al., 2017). Given the level of psychological expertise that may not be present among organizational and public administration scholars, reticence to explore this line of inquiry may be understandable. Nevertheless, as Van Witteloostuijn and company suggest, research that focuses on personality and self-identity as important PSM antecedents may provide deeper insights that could help "explain differences

found with regard to the impact of PSM on behavioral and organizational outcomes" as well as "shed light on the ongoing debate as to whether PSM is a stable trait or a changeable attitude" (p. 21). Though this study does not delve deeply into psychological processes, the findings are relevant for and provide insights into the PSM-identity relationship.

Higher Public Service Education Research

Though the primary concern of this study centers on the motivational forces that influence collegians to select public service careers, the final aim of my research is to apply the findings to the formation (or modification) of college-level academic and programmatic designs aimed at encouraging, providing preparation for, and professionally facilitating the entrance of college and university undergraduates into their chosen public service careers. To better understand the scholarly context of this research aim, literature from the field of public service education was explored. The first level of exploration is concerned with the broader field of public service higher education that encompasses the fields of collegiate civic engagement education, and undergraduate majors of political science, public policy, and public administration. The latter portion of this section will focus more specifically on scholarship that has explored teaching and learning, and program design within U.S. undergraduate political science programs.

Higher Public Service Education and Public Service Career Decisions

One of the first lines of inquiry in this review of public service education research concerns the impact of higher education on the levels of civic and political engagement that underlie student decisions to pursue public service careers. Much of this scholarship was considered earlier in this chapter in the review of research from the fields of education and PSM where scholars in each field found statistical evidence supporting the assertion that advanced

levels of education contribute to: 1) increased civic engagement (Hillygus, 2005; Kiesa, et al., 2007; Lopez and Brown, 2006; Lopez and Elrod, 2006; Lopez and Kiesa, 2009; Mayer, 2011; Nie and Hillygus, 2001; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Persson, 2013; Pryor, et al., 2010; Sax, 2000, 2004); and 2) elevated levels of PSM in individuals within the public sector (Bright, 2005; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Lewis and Frank, 2002; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007a; Pandey & Stazyk, 2008; Perry, 1997; Vandenabeele, 2011).

Beyond the analysis of data that highlight the correlations between higher education and increased civic engagement in its numerous forms (including public service), some researchers have explored the substance of academic programs and curriculum in search of specific educational elements that appear most influential in promoting civic engagement. As previously noted, civic engagement education research revealed a relationship between elevated levels of civic engagement and specific areas of study (most notably social science) and course content that requires critical thinking and analysis (please see previous discussion - Nie and Hillygus, 2001; Galston, 2007; Hillygus, 2005).

Similarly, several PSM scholars have examined the relationship between higher education curriculum and increased PSM levels. Echoing the findings of the civic educators previously discussed, Vandenabeele (2011) observed higher PSM among individuals whose collegiate concentrations were in the fields of social science, health care, or language education, as opposed to those who studied the sciences, business, law, and the arts. Other PSM scholars have found that personal levels of PSM was higher among those whose undergraduate coursework included classes that were centered in public service values (Houston, 2000; Pandey & Stazyk, 2008). [24]

[24] Within the PSM field, a notable exception to the studies supporting the educational impact on PSM development is Kjeldsen (2012) whose research "reveals that the association between education and PSM

It bears noting that among PSM scholars, caution is exercised around the assertion that higher PSM among undergraduate students is predictive of public service career choices. Though the research supports the conclusion that individuals with higher PSM are attracted to public service professions[25], several studies suggest that "PSM does not automatically increase employee attraction to or satisfaction with public employment" (Christensen and Wright, 2011, p. 738). While affirming the service inclinations of individuals with higher PSM, some researchers have found that PSM holds more professional predictive power when combined with other factors that influence career decisions, such as value alignment and organizational mission congruence (Wright and Pandey, 2008, 2011), and prior professional experience within the public sector (Bright and Graham, 2015; Henderson and Chetkovich, 2014; Tschirhart et al., 2008). The cautious approach of these PSM scholars should be taken into consideration when exploring the interplay between education and public service interest.

Looking beyond curriculum, a few researchers in both areas of study (civic education and PSM development) have investigated the influence of programmatic and non-classroom related aspects of the collegiate experience on the civic activism and public service inclinations of college students. A few studies have found that student extra-curricular and/or co-curricular involvement in civic and political action organizations and events points toward increased levels of "pro-public" sensibilities (Galston, 2007; Kim, 2021[26]; Misa, et al., 2005).

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is perhaps not as uniform as previous studies have assumed" (p. 500).

[25] Please see the discussion in the previous section on PSM research.

[26] In the interest of transparency, the area of focus for Kim was PSM levels among high school graduates in Korea and the impact education had on individual PSM development. Many of the educational dynamics observed by Kim were reflective of the findings in Galston, 2007, and Misa, et al., 2005).

Though the relationship between public service education and the selection of public service careers remains an area of interest, the evidence examined to this point supports the conclusion that higher education has a positive impact on collegiate public service career plans. The evidence further suggests that, to a large extent, the arena of public service relies on higher education. It is through public service education in its numerous forms that individuals who have professional aims within the public arena can and do receive encouragement for their career aspirations, become prepared to offer quality service in a variety of capacities, and are often assisted in their transition from student to public service professional through the help of educational personnel and programs.

Public Service Teaching and Learning

Considering the broader aims of this study and the important role higher education plays in preparing individuals for public service careers, a brief survey of recent higher public service education scholarship seems prudent. Though limited in scope, this literature survey seeks to gauge the state of the discipline and discover the most effective curricular/programmatic designs and pedagogical strategies recommended by theorists, researchers, and practitioners within the field. The focus of this survey will be on scholarship that centers on undergraduate public service programs, despite the fact that many of the more recent discipline-critical studies in the field involve graduate programs (Haupt, et al., 2017; Jennings, 2019; Kinsella and Waite, 2021; Ku, et al., 2016; Plant, 2018; Ponomariov and McCabe, 2017; Rubaii, 2016; Sandberg and Kecskes, 2017; Wood and Kickham, 2021)[27]. As noted, most of the studies surveyed concentrate on recommendations specific to the political science major, in keeping with the observation of Smith and McConaughey (2021) who note: “Political science departments remain a key driver of

[27] Where appropriate, graduate level studies with relevant recommendations for undergraduate instruction and programming will be considered.

civic education" at the undergraduate level (p. 362). In the interest of brevity, the following discussion will explore recommendations from the field pertaining to undergraduate instruction in two arenas: 1) course content; and 2) teaching methods and programmatic design.

Course Content

While the past three decades have brought numerous changes to the landscape of political undergraduate education, especially in the rise of alternate instructional modalities, the literature reviewed indicates that the basic content of political studies courses has remained relatively consistent. Overwhelmingly, scholarship that has focused on advancing undergraduate political science education offer very few curriculum changes. The standard for political education programs remains the recommendations of the “Wahlke Report” (Wahlke, 1991), that contained the work of the Task Force on the Political Science Major, which was commissioned in the late 1980s by the American Political Science Association (APSA). The Task Force was charged with assessing political science majors throughout the U.S. Under the leadership of its chair, Dr. John Wahlke (University of Arizona), the task force outlined 12 recommendations “intended to serve as a blueprint for political science departments in the development and reform of their undergraduate majors” (Smith and McConaughey, 2021, p. 358). Embedded within the report’s recommendations were specific courses aimed at preserving and advancing a liberal arts emphasis within the discipline.

Even though a handful of studies found that the Wahlke recommendations had not been applied evenly nor thoroughly within U.S. political science undergraduate programs since the publication of the report (Ishiyama, 2005; Ishiyama, et al., 2006; Rogers, 2021; Smith and McConaughey, 2021), political science education scholarship consistently refers to the Wahlke

curricular recommendations as a kind of baseline for political science programs.[28] In the report, course content recommendations were organized into two main sections: 1) subject matter content; and 2) methodology, skills (Wahlke, 1991, pp. 56-57). One of the key features of the report's subject matter recommendations was the suggestion that all political science programs should contain a set of common core courses, which would be offered sequentially and with increasing levels of intensity. The recommended core courses were: 1) American Government; 2) Introduction to Politics; 3) Political Philosophy (both Western and non-Western philosophy); 4) Government Ethics; 5) Political Cultures; 6) Comparative Politics; 7) International Relations; and 8) Constitutional Law.[29] Beyond the core courses recommended, the report also suggested that students be required to take courses in fields that were deemed relevant to political studies. The specific disciplines identified were history, geography, and economics (p. 56).

In addition to the subject matter courses recommended by the Wahlke Report, attention was given to additional methods- and skills-based courses that were seen as vital for political efficacy, especially at the professional level. The types of courses mentioned in the report were: 1) basic statistics; 2) research theory (specifically normative and analytic theories); 3) research methods and modeling; 4) political writing; 5) computer literacy (which was especially prescient for the early 1990s); and 6) the art of verbal presentations (p. 57). Though listed under a different heading within the report's "Schematic Summary of Recommendations" (pp. 56-58), the Task Force also placed a high priority on internships and other types of practicums (such as federal and state capitol events, study abroad programs, and political participation in "campaigns,

[28] This observation may not be too surprising given the contention of Ishiyama, et al., 2006 that the report simply reapplied and reimagined the categorical structure of political science education that had been a part of political science discourse since the 1920s.

[29] Not all the course titles were specific to the Wahlke Report (1991). In a couple of instances, I took some license in providing common course titles that matched the report's course descriptions.

conventions, and journalistic coverage of such events" - p. 57) as a primary means for providing experiential learning.

Outside the consideration of common curriculum, some recent studies approached the question of political science courses by exploring areas of greatest curricular need. In most cases, the impetus for these specific studies was the observed decline in (or absence of) undergraduate course offerings, recommended by the Wahlke Report, that were seen as valuable for the practice of political engagement in the current context. Some examples include Schultz (2016) who advocated for the instruction of ethical theory and values as a means of reversing the divisive nature of current political discourse and practice. Similarly, Fuertes (2021), whose study was based in the U.K., believed that embedding ethics and the concept of *public value* into political education curriculum was vital for ensuring quality public service and political engagement. Emphasizing the need for critical thinking within the field of public administration, Ongaro (2019) argued for the inclusion of philosophical reflection in political studies, not in terms of a discipline (i.e., the study of philosophy) per se but as a method of analysis that equips public servants and other political operatives to answer key philosophical questions that arise from real world challenges. And, finally, out of concern for the declining popularity of public administration programs, Braga (2020) analyzed perceived weaknesses in public administration instruction, focusing on the need for students to understand "how public sector organizations work and whether they work properly" (p. 285) as opposed to the more academic concentrations on politics and public policymaking. As a possible solution, Braga suggested curriculum that is a "hybridization and cross contamination" of political studies with a variety of "humanistic disciplines" (p. 292) that requires students to grapple with the application of political theory to the study of individual and societal behavior.

Another group of recent studies has examined the impact of instructional areas of concentration that fall outside the traditional content disciplines. Reminiscent of the Wahlke Report, these studies focus on skills- and practice-based curriculum aimed at preparing students for professional life after graduation. The skills-based studies emphasize two different kinds of skills, categorized by some as "hard" skills and "soft" skills (Harvey, 2000; Kinsella & Waite, 2021; Robles, 2012). According to Kinsella and Waite (2021), hard skills are "teachable and measurable abilities, such as technical know-how and substantive knowledge of the field"; the kinds of skills that are often featured on resumés (p. 338). Many recent studies that explored the value of hard skills have been focused on graduate programs (Haupt, et al., 2017; Henderson and Chetkovich, 2014; Kinsella & Waite, 2021), which may not be surprising given the content of masters-level programs. However, inferences can be made from these studies that undergraduate educators would be well-served to include instruction on the types of skills needed for effective public service, which range from leadership/management training to building resumés. The development of these and other hard skills has been the focus of other studies that are concerned with undergraduate education (Collins, et al., 2012; Lewis, 2017).

By contrast, some recent studies have emphasized the development of *soft* skills, which Kinsella and Waite (2021) define as: "character traits, behaviors and attitudes associated with good employees . . . [who exhibit] personal attributes such as being well-organized, self-motivated, dependable, and likeable" (p. 338). For several of these studies, their recommendations for soft skill development were combined with specific instructional strategies aimed at facilitating skill growth. Two examples are Merritt and Kelley (2018) and Saldivar (2015) whose research pointed to the need for and effectiveness of collaborative and team-based instruction that gives students opportunities for personal growth in the face of professional,

interpersonal relationships. While testing for the effectiveness of *active learning* strategies, Careaga-Tagüeña and Sanabria-Pulido (2021) found that students not only acquired public service skills through active learning, but also placed a high value on such practices when evaluating their educations in retrospect. The conclusion drawn from these and other studies points toward the importance of embedding personal growth courses in political science and other forms of public service education curriculum and instruction.

When referring to *practice-based* learning, the field consistently frames these kinds of learning experiences in professional terms. In other words, recommendations for practice-based learning point toward opportunities for undergraduates to experience life within the professional political arena. Not surprisingly, most of the recommendations emphasize the value of internships and other kinds of practicums (Collins, et al., 2012; Merritt and Kelley, 2012; Molina and McKeown, 2012). Though their study was focused on Masters of Public Policy programs, Bright and Graham (2015) advocate for offering undergraduate students exposure to the realm of professional public service through intentional and substantive interactions with public service professionals. Additionally, as will be discussed more fully in the next section, several researchers underscore the need for *service learning* in a variety of forms as a means for helping students encounter the realities of life in the public sector. No matter the form, education scholarship consistently underscores the developmental value of course and program requirements that facilitate practical undergraduate experiences.

Teaching Methods and Programmatic Designs

As may be obvious in some of the previous discussion, much of recent public service education scholarship has placed a high priority on the professionalization of undergraduate instruction. In their survey of U.S. public service education programs, Smith and McConaughey

(2021) not only observed the trend toward more career-oriented instruction and program designs, but also encouraged more programs to move in this direction as a means of maintaining the viability of the field. In addition to matters related to the survival of the political studies field (e.g., degree attractiveness, and market relevance), several of the studies reviewed emphasized the need for colleges and universities to orient their political studies programs toward equipping future public servants to provide, frankly, excellent and effective public service in the face of current and future public sector challenges (Collins, et al., 2012; Jennings, 2019; Lewis, 2017; McClellan, 2021; Rogers, 2021; Rubaii, 2016[30]). Many of these scholars would agree with the sentiment expressed by Newcomer and Allen (2010), that "the intended outcome of public service education is to add value to individuals and organizations -- ultimately in the public interest" (p. 215).

In terms of instructional approaches, one of the educational strategies that was most consistently promoted was *service-learning*, defined as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes" (Jacoby, 2014, p. 14). The popularity of service-learning has increased over the past three decades, especially within higher education.[31] While many who champion service-learning can be found in the arena of civic education, several public service educators see it as an important component of political science and other political studies programs, especially as a part of community-based

[30] In the interest of full disclosure, Rubaii (2016) was focused on graduate-level public sector programs. However, the case made in her article for placing the aims of effective governance at the center of public service education was pertinent for undergraduate application.

[31] It should be noted that service-learning as an essential aspect of political education is not without its detractors (Boyte, 2008; Checkoway, 1998, 2009; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Cress, Burack, Giles, Elkins, & Stevens, 2010; Keen & Hall, 2008; Knefelkamp & Schneider, 1997; and Scobey, 2010), who each expressed skepticism about the degree to which service-learning contributes to participation in political structures and institutions, especially within a democratic context.

curricular designs (Allam, et al., 2021; Carrizales & Bennett, 2013; Collins, et al., 2012; Finley, 2011; Hunter & Brisbin, 2013; Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2019).

Given that many of the studies reviewed concentrated on the wider civic and political implications of undergraduate education programs, the observation that few specific pedagogical recommendations were provided may be unremarkable. Across the board, strategies for instructor success were more implied by (or, perhaps, inferred from) the kinds of instructional approaches promoted. One exception to this observation was Careaga-Tagüeña and Sanabria-Pulido (2021) in their analysis of *active learning* instructional strategies. In their study, they found that instructors who were effective in using active learning saw themselves (and operated) more as coaches than experts (p. 6). These instructors also demonstrated the ability to continuously adapt and restructure their courses to match the educational needs of their students within the context of the active learning outcomes (pp. 14-16). Beyond these specific observations and recommendations, the studies surveyed emphasized the importance of instructor competency and personal engagement with their students both inside and outside the classroom setting.

When considering the broader the field of public service higher education, in its diverse iterations explored in the previous discussion, one observation seems to be pervasive. At this point in time, educational scholars have placed a high priority on instruction that not only encourages student *civic*, *political*, and *public service* **engagement** but advocates for **effective** engagement that is aimed at facilitating observable (if not measurable) civic transformation. Put simply, the realm of political higher education has mobilized to ensure that college graduates are not merely in political and public service, but they are in it for the greater purpose of improving civic life wherever they might find themselves. From my perspective, this not only speaks to the

wider concern of this study's primary research problem, namely, the role of higher education in increasing civic engagement, but it emphasizes engagement that has a lasting positive impact; a concern which was shared by this study's participants.

The Crux of the Study

In consideration of the role higher education plays in addressing the need for increased civic engagement within the U.S., this study explores a specific form of civic engagement, namely, professional public service. Beyond the impact collegiate education had on the decisions of recent college graduates to enter the public arena, this study seeks to understand the wider spectrum of factors that motivate individuals to choose careers in public service. As a representative group, the individuals interviewed in this study demonstrated that civic engagement through professional public service was not only the best course of action for them, but, in many cases, the only avenue for them to fulfill their service aspirations. As will be seen, these individuals were drawn to public service in their youth and sought out developmental opportunities that enabled them to achieve their service goals. Through these experiences, this study's participants not only gained access to the world of professional public service but became the kinds of public servants whose examples others who share similar service ambitions may wish to follow.

CHAPTER TWO: THE INTEPRETIVE FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

There are numerous ways to analyze the findings of this study, especially given its qualitative nature. Out of the myriad options, the method that made the most sense to me was to look at the data through the perspective of *praxis*. Observed commonalities between the respondents' narratives revealed a common pattern of movements reflecting the *praxis* dynamics of *being-doing-reflecting*. The following discussion looks at the foundational ideas underlying the concept of *praxis*, especially in light of its more recent use, and provides a general overview of the Praxis Lens used in the analysis of this study's data and details the conceptual contributions of four key thinkers - Aristotle, Hegel, Dewey, and Maslow[32] - in constructing the Praxis Lens.

Conceptual Foundations and Modern Uses of *Praxis*

In its ancient Greek context, *praxis* was used generally to refer to action that was taken in relation to commercial endeavors. Liddell and Scott (1871/1980) define *praxis* as: "a doing, transaction, business, affair; the progress or result of a business" (p. 582). Like most words, *praxis* took on different meanings as time progressed, depending on its usage.[33] In its most basic form, however, it is safe to conclude that the word was used to connote activity that was carried out for a specific purpose. This same meaning is reflected in more recent definitions of the word, as is seen in the Merriam-Webster dictionary's definition of *praxis* as: "action, practice: such as practical application of theory" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

While maintaining relative adherence to the traditional meaning, usage of *praxis* as a conceptual framework is varied. In numerous sources, *praxis* has been used as a kind of

[32] Listed chronologically, not in order of impact or influence.

[33] Please see the discussion of Aristotle's use of *praxis* below.

shorthand for "informed or reflexive action." One example of this usage was found in Raimondo and Newcomer (2017). While making a rather convincing argument for using mixed-methods approaches to public administration research, the authors reference *praxis* numerous times but never provide a clear definition of the term. An inference can be made from the term's usage in the article that *praxis,* used almost exclusively in relation to theory and methodology, was meant to denote the applied use of research data in the activity (practice) of public administration.

Other researchers have embraced the social critical connotations of *praxis* in their references. Seen from this theoretical perspective, *praxis* is viewed as a process whereby a given practice is informed by concerns for societal transformation. It is, as was stated by one source, "the fusion of critical theory and social action, realized through critically reflective practice" (Ng & Wright, 2017, p. 784). It could be argued that for critical scholars, the element of *reflection* is as important, if not more so, than *theory*. This perspective may be best seen in the definition of *praxis* offered by the notable educator, Paulo Freire (1970/2000), whose use of critical theory left a profound impact on modern educational practice (Torres, 2014; Gadotti, 2017). For Freire (1970/2000), *praxis* was: "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 46).[34]

In terms of modern usage, the *praxis* perspective that is the most instructive for this study focuses on specific aspects of the concept that are personally transformative, values-centered, and educationally applicable. Not surprisingly, much of the scholarship that has proven the most helpful in this regard comes from the field of education. This assessment is not intended to imply that praxis perspectives from other fields are not relevant. However, since one of the secondary aims of this study is to apply its findings to the shaping of collegiate/university public service

[34] It may go without saying that Freire's use of *praxis* is much more complex, especially as a construct for exegeting social power structures and steps necessary for affecting transformative societal change. In reference to social critical theory, it should be noted that this study is sensitive to the issues related to critical theory. However, the critical ramifications of *praxis* will not be of primary concern.

programs, the praxis perspectives of educators are particularly germane.

When exploring education literature for praxis perspectives, one of the most immediate characteristics observed is the emphasis on the cyclical nature of *praxis*. Rather than a more prescriptive "Idea A informs Action B" formula, most educational scholars see *praxis* as a dynamic, reciprocal process. As summarized by one political educator, "A praxis approach to teaching and learning . . . follows from the assumption that theory informs practice, and practice, theory. . . . It suggests that theory, individual experience, reflection, history, and action are mutually reinforcing" (Dede, 2002, p. 288). An argument could be made that an effective educational strategy could be built on and around these essential elements of the praxis educational perspective alone.

Beyond the essential conceptual framework of *praxis*, educational scholars have also emphasized the *moral* component of the praxis perspective. Seen from this point of view, *praxis* is used a way of understanding individual actions that serve a greater purpose.

> *Praxis* is a particular kind of action. It is action that is *morally-committed, and oriented and informed by traditions in a field*. It is the kind of action people are engaged in when they think about what their action will mean *in the world*. *Praxis* is what people do when they take into account all the circumstances and exigencies that confront them at a particular moment and then, taking the broadest view they can of what is *best* to do, they *act*. [In this regard, *praxis* is seen] as a kind of enlightened and 'elevated' action . . . undertaken in occupations and professions like education or social work or medicine or farming (Kemmis and Smith, 2008, p. 4).

Given this study's focus on public service motivations, a moral perspective on praxis provides clarity for understanding the motivational impulses of those who serve the public interest and the experiences that have fueled their public service aspirations.

Another facet of *praxis* that is advocated among education theorists is the principle of *agency*, which views individuals as actors who are free to make deliberative decisions and act

accordingly. In this regard, the praxis perspective highlights the crucial role of intentionality in individual decision-making and action. By adding the moral component to this dynamic, the public service intentions of this study's respondents can be seen in sharper focus. Once again, Kemmis and Smith provide an excellent summary of this viewpoint:

> From the perspective of *praxis*, the actor is (perhaps intensely) aware of being watchful or conscious in order to "steer" unfolding action and events towards a desirable state of affairs, not only in the best interests of participants in the action in the here and now, but also in terms of the good for humankind. . . . *Praxis* is not just action in or on others and the world; it is also and always a process of becoming, of self-formation - the formation of the moral agency and the very identity of the actors *through their acts* (p. 7).

This aspect is vital for the Praxis Lens used in this study, which intentionally avoids a deterministic analysis of the narratives provided by the respondents. While acknowledging the influence of several factors that contributed to the forming (and transforming) of these public servants, the participants of this study were never viewed as "products" of specific determinative forces. Rather, they were seen as agents who intentionally sought to make professional public service their life's work.

The Framework of the Praxis Lens

As note previously, the concept of *praxis* was selected as the primary interpretive principle for this study as a result of the initial analysis of the research data. As the foundational ideas of *praxis* were studied in greater detail, it seemed clear that the primary interest of *praxis* theoreticians is the dynamic interaction that occurs between the internal world of individuals and their patterns of action that are specifically oriented toward contributing to the respective societies around them. This praxis dynamic became increasingly more obvious as analysis of the interview data progressed. The reciprocal relationships between the aspirations of individuals on the one hand, their service activities on the other hand, and the subsequent impact one asserted

on the other were observed consistently throughout the interviews. The more in-depth the data analysis, the more the value of *praxis* came into sharper focus.

While distinctly personal, individualized, and situationally specific, the stories relayed by each participant shared certain characteristics, following a pattern that appeared consistent with the principles of *praxis*. Accordingly, the Praxis Lens was constructed to organize the findings and provide a framework for identifying and explaining the phenomena observed. The Lens was built on the basic idea central to *praxis* theory that a person's *being* influences *doing*, which then impacts the numerous ways one *reflects* on both *being* and *doing*. Within the context of this study, this pattern was observed as follows: personal service dispositions and aspirations prompt service actions that, in turn, offer individuals new and/or more extensive insights about the activity of service within a professional context that repeatedly influence transformative assessments of service values, self-perception, and career challenges, as well as a reorientation toward professional service goals.

Based on these observations, the Lens is structured around the trifold elements of *being*, *doing*, and *reflecting* (with the understanding that *reflecting* includes *becoming*, which leads to a new, revised, or even transformed *being*). However, given the dynamic and cyclical nature of *praxis*, these three aspects were framed as *movements* to reflect their interactive relationship and avoid possible static interpretations. Additionally, these movements were intended to be seen as primarily descriptive as opposed to prescriptive. To be clear, the Lens was not created to be broadly generalized nor formulized. It was conceived as a general framework for describing consistent patterns observed in the findings that may be applicable to other studies of a similar nature.

To capture the broader conceptual aspects of the praxis cycle, each movement was

provided a descriptive label that conveyed its dynamic character, further expanding its interpretive use. Accordingly, the Lens consists of the three movements of: 1) *gravitation* (being); 2) *engagement* (doing); and 3) *assessment* (reflecting/becoming). As a whole, the Lens and its three movements were anchored in and informed by the general modern conception of *praxis* discussed previously, as well as the philosophies and theories of the individuals listed above: Aristotle, Hegel, Dewey, and Maslow. The Lens framework, including its constituent parts, will be considered below in relation to its philosophical moorings.

Philosophical Foundations and Contributions to the Praxis Lens

Before proceeding, it should be noted that the goal of this discussion is a further explanation of the Praxis Lens used in this study. Accordingly, the following philosophical examinations are in no way comprehensive. This is not the forum for (nor is this writer fully capable of providing) a thorough treatment of the philosophies of the thinkers discussed, though the siren call of such a treatment was significant. Rather, the discussion below seeks to describe and explain in basic terms the key ideas that were gleaned from these thinkers and applied to the Lens while maintaining conceptual fidelity to the four individuals' essential philosophical postures and bodies of work.

The Philosophical Foundations of the Lens as a Whole

Anyone who ventures into the territory of *praxis* owes a debt to the seminal works of Aristotle. It is difficult to imagine any consideration of the praxis paradigm that does not acknowledge Aristotle's influence, especially when framing of the praxis dynamics involved in any intellectual endeavor. When looking at the entirety of the Praxis Lens used for this study, Aristotle's influence is significant for several reasons, not the least of which is his general shaping of the concept. In simple terms, Aristotle embraced the concept of *praxis* and recast it as

a part of a greater process, specifically in relation to another principle that was of great importance to the philosopher, *theoria*, which was widely understood to mean "theoretical thought" or "contemplation" (Rorty, 1978, p. 343). As will be discussed below, the juxtaposition of *theoria* with *praxis* is central to the concept's application of *praxis*. In summary, Aristotle used *praxis* to refer to "rational action based on a conscious choice and [seen] as the product of observations, desires, and intellect or reason" (Ponte and Ax, 2008, p. ix).

This general summary of Aristotle's praxis paradigm notwithstanding, it should be noted that Aristotle's use of *praxis* is not always clear nor, necessarily, consistent. Within his corpus of work, Aristotle's interpretation of praxis principles can have differing applications that may or may not be congruous. One example of this discontinuity was observed by Belfiore (1983) who identifies numerous places in Aristotle's *Poetics* where he distinguishes *praxis* from *ethos* (ethics) in such a way that the concept of *praxis* bears no resemblance to moral action. Even in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, acknowledged by many Aristotelian scholars as "the canonical text for Aristotle's account of the virtues" (MacIntyre, 1981/2007, p. 147), Aristotle seems to paint an inconsistent portrait of *praxis*. This observation was echoed by the translator of the 1985 edition who notes that Aristotle's use of *praxis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is not always clear nor strictly confined to a specific meaning (*N.E.,* Irwin, 1985, p. 385)[35]. Accordingly, Aristotle's contributions to the Lens are intentionally limited to his application of the concept to *ethical praxis,* which holds the greatest relevance for this study.

Apart from Aristotle's general construction of *praxis*, it could be argued that the character of the Praxis Lens is most dependent on the ideas of John Dewey. The principles upon which the

[35] The form of this citation may not adhere strictly to APA formatting standards, but I have chosen to use the pattern observed among Aristotelian scholars of citing Aristotle's works using abbreviations (e.g., *N.E.* for *Nicomachean Ethics*, or *Pol.* for *Politics*) followed by other appropriate reference details.

Lens is most reliant (discussed previously) were drawn from and shaped by Dewey's perspective on psychology that presented "an integrated way of understanding the relation between organism and environment and cognition and behavior that had been separated" in other psychological models popularized at the end of the 19th century (Bredo, 1998, p. 447). Though his psychological framework can be seen in several of his writings (e.g., *The Child and the Curriculum,* 1906; *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. 1916; and *Human Nature and Conduct,* 1922), his articulation of an integrated psychology is perhaps the clearest in his paper, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" (1896).

In simplistic terms, the psychological models that were growing in popularity as the 1800s drew to a close were, in the words of Bredo (1998), "mechanistic and reductionist" (p. 448). They sought to explain human cognitive processes in terms of cause and effect, or stimulus and response as though the aspects of the human psyche were the product of the sequential and linear interactions between entities that could be separated and analyzed on their own. This model was called the *reflex arc*. By contrast, Dewey and his fellow pragmatists, such as William James and George Herbert Mead, "attempted to develop a psychology that could bridge the gap between a physiologically reductive and an idealistic or culturally holistic view[36] of mental life" (p. 448). In his critique of the reflex arc, Dewey (1896) argued against the dualism of the burgeoning psychologies of his time, offering as an alternative his psychological framework that viewed cognitive and affective processes as an integrated whole or "coordination" (p. 358). To better conceptualize his construct, Dewey used the analogy of a child reaching for a burning candle, an image he borrowed from James (p. 358).

[36] Bredo (1998) provides a brief summary of the psychology of what he called "Idealist philosophers who saw individual human minds as expressions of a deistic universal Mind" (p. 448). This is the philosophy to which he referred as "holistic".

In the analogy, the child sees the light emitted by the candle and reaches for it only to be burned once the child's hand reaches the flame. Observing the child's encounter with the candle through the perspective of mechanical psychology, the experience would be described (as Dewey did) as a process of "sensation-followed-by-idea-followed-by-movement" (p. 358), thus fitting the stimulus-response framework. However, Dewey argued that the candle encounter should be understood as a more complex process.

> Upon analysis, we find that we begin not with a sensory stimulus, but with a sensori-motor coordination, the optical-ocular, and that in a certain sense it is the movement which is primary, and the sensation which is secondary, the movement of body, head and eye muscles determining the quality of what is experienced. In other words, the real beginning is with the act of seeing; it is looking, and not a sensation of light (pp. 358-359).

Dewey addressed the response of "the reaching" in terms of the *coordination* concept. The child's hand reaching for the flame may be subsequent in its timing, but it was not an entirely separate action. The "seeing and grasping" were mutually reinforced components of "a bigger coordination" (p. 359). Dewey explained this coordination by stating: "The ability of the hand to do its work will depend, either directly or indirectly, upon its control, as well as its stimulation, by the act of vision" (p. 359). Both the seeing and the reaching now become indispensable parts of a larger process (coordination), with both actions relying on each other. The hand cannot reach its destination without the eye, which means the eye now serves a different purpose than mere observation. It is being used to complete the act of reaching.

Before he completed his analogy, Dewey addressed "the affairs at the next stage," which was the burning of the child's hand (p. 359). Once again, Dewey contended that the burn was not a separate entity or "entirely new occurrence" (p. 359). It was a part of the same sensori-motor coordination that began with the observation of the candle. Seen in its entirety, the child's encounter with the candle receives much of its value from the resulting burn because the child

acquired new insights and gained the ability to avoid a similar experience in the future. Seen from this perspective, the entire process was not a series of experiences replacing each other (i.e., seeing leads to reaching leads to burning). Rather, it was a process of development that will be reinforced and expanded over time, especially as circumstances allow for the application of lessons learned. As Dewey contended, it is not an arc but a "circuit within which fall distinctions of stimulus and response as functional phases of its own mediation or completion" (p. 370).

Herein lies the essence of Dewey's broader contribution to the formation of the Praxis Lens. Though there is more that can be said about Dewey's critique of the reflex arc, the principles discussed are sufficient for describing their impact on the character of the Lens. In terms of its overall conception, Dewey's theories have influenced the Lens in three key ways. First, the Lens was conceived as cyclical to mirror Dewey's ideas of experiential circuits. Second, Dewey's emphasis on coordinated and corresponding actions is the primary reason the trifold elements of the Lens are described as "movements" rather than static categories. The active character of the Lens is also aimed at capturing Dewey's idea that actions are not always neatly segregated into sequential steps; that the act of *doing*, for example, has its genesis in a person's *being*, and their experiential *reflection* occurs both during and after their *doing*. Third, the Lens is designed to provide articulation to developmental processes that are ongoing throughout an individual's life. These processes are formative, informative, and transformative, playing a vital role in a person's *becoming*, which was consistently observed in the respondents' public service narratives.

The Philosophical Foundations of the Lens' Movements

Beyond its general construction, the specific movements of the Lens were influenced by particular philosophical concepts. For fear of contradicting the stated reasons for the fluid

construction of the Lens, an explanation of each movement is offered as a way of providing further rationale for their conception and interpretive use. Consideration of the movements of *gravitation*, *engagement*, and *assessment/becoming* is not meant to imply that each movement is a self-contained whole. Though each movement will be examined separately, the disparate explanations are provided with the understanding that they are part of a larger, integrated process. Accordingly, some of the philosophies discussed in relation to a specific movement may, on closer examination, overlap and apply to multiple movements.

Gravitation

The term, *gravitation*, was chosen for the first movement as a way of describing the respondents' initial attraction to public service. The attraction to serve was not the result of a stimulus-response interaction, to borrow from our previous discussion of Dewey. As the findings reveal, the respondents' *gravitated* toward public service for reasons that were not always clear but were consistently rooted in their personhood and were reflective of their individual interests and passions. To assist in the construction of this initial movement, the philosophies of Aristotle and Dewey were, once again, particularly informative.

Aristotle's Ethical Praxis

As stated previously, Aristotle's conception of *ethical praxis* has the greatest relevance for this study. For its application to the *gravitation* movement, the matter of greatest concern was Aristotle's perspective on the special character of *ethical praxis*.[37] To understand Aristotle's use of *praxis*, particularly within the ethical context, attention needs to be paid first to his distinction between *praxis* and *poesis*. The root of *poesis* can be translated as: "to make, produce, execute;

[37] As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this section, the following discussion of the differentiation of *praxis* from other Greek "action" words also has importance for the *engagement* movement and would have been appropriate for the exploration of that movement. I decided to place this discussion in the *gravitation* movement primarily because of its contribution to the movement's conception.

or to bring to pass, cause, effect" (Liddell and Scott, 1871/1980, p. 568). The distinction is important if for no other reason than to clarify Aristotle's preferred usage of *praxis* by describing what it was not. For Aristotle, *poesis* represented actions that are compelled by external motivating factors, and therefore, should be avoided unless the desired outcome is of an essential nature, like working the soil in order to feed oneself and one's family. From an ethical perspective, Balaban (1990) asserts Aristotle's belief that the activity of *poesis* derives its significance only by its end results. "Aristotle argues that in ethics as well as in politics, activities of this sort - like labor in general - being merely the means adopted for the sake of something else, have no intrinsic value and are therefore ignoble" (pp. 186-187).

Key to understanding Aristotle's differentiation of the two terms is his application of the word, *telos* (an end goal or aim). Balaban argues that Aristotle uses two different understandings of *telos* as a way of separating *poesis* from *praxis* based on the objectives of each kind of activity. The first meaning of *telos* as "the goal of an activity" is applied to *poesis* and is most likely the oldest and most common understanding of the word (p. 188). It is a more static conception of "end" or "goal" attached to actions that terminate once the objective is achieved. This kind of *telos* presupposes limitations of time, materials, and energy, which point toward the need for efficiency, which would not have been relevant to *praxis*. This being the case, "the activity is not required for its own sake" (p. 189).

The second application of *telos* "as actualization or immediate realization" (p. 189) is compatible with Aristotle's ethical conception of *praxis*. "Here, the end and the nature of the act that leads to it are one and the same. The end is, as it were, so responsive to the means that it is identical with it" (p. 189). Aristotle applies this subsequent understanding of *telos* to the concept of *praxis* so that "end" and "means" are not separate, as they are with the *telos* of *poesis*.

Rather, with *praxis* the "means" and the "end" are the same thing. "In *praxis*," Balaban contends, "it is the activity itself that counts, and not the final result" (p. 190). In other words, in Aristotle's eyes, a virtuous, ethical action (*praxis*) possesses its own purpose and its own reward. One does not necessarily pursue moral actions in order to achieve moral outcomes, though those outcomes may be realized. One acts ethically as a reflection of that individual's character and virtue.

The relevance of this aspect of Aristotle's praxis perspective for this study is seen in its connection to the question of the impetus for public service. From this Aristotelian point of view, we gain a philosophical framework for understanding the public service aims of the respondents. As noted, the somewhat mysterious nature of the respondents' moves toward public service gains greater clarity when seen through the *praxis* vs. *poesis* perspective. Conceptually, we are justified in concluding that, for the public servants in this study, an initial interest in public service was rooted in the perceived "nobility" (to borrow a phrase) of the activity, irrespective of the immediate or eventual outcomes. Put simply, by applying this aspect of Aristotle's ethical *praxis* concept, we have philosophical (though admittedly tautological) footing for concluding that the respondents sought public service for the purpose of serving the public.

Dewey's Concept of Disposition

In addition to the contribution of Dewey's integrated psychology discussed previously, which not only applies to the gravitation movement but is consistent with Aristotle's conception, the construction of the gravitation movement was reliant on another key contribution of Dewey. As will be explored more fully in Chapter Four, one of the most consistent characteristics observed in the respondents' public service accounts was their innate desire or an internal drive to enter and carve out long-term careers within the arena of public service. As a way of better understanding this internal drive, Dewey's concept of *disposition* was especially helpful.

For Dewey, *disposition* was closely tied to a person's *will*, especially when trying to distinguish between habitual and intentional individual behavior (Dewey 1922, pp. 18-20). But *disposition* involves more than simple intentionality, though intent plays a key role. "For a disposition means a tendency to act, a potential energy needing only opportunity to become kinetic and overt" (p. 21). The value of Dewey's concept of disposition for this study is found in the multiple ways that the term may be understood and used. For Dewey, dispositions can be inherent within individuals, manifesting as "predispositions" and/or "attitudes" (p. 20). Dispositions may be and frequently are conditioned by a person's societal environment and social interactions (pp. 10-11). Dispositions can be "animators" for acts of the *will*, even providing the foundations upon which "habitual" behavior is built. Dispositions are "persistent," exerting influence on a wide range of human activity (p. 21). In view of the multifaceted nature of the concept, Dewey is clear that one's actions are the indicators of and provide circumstantial evidence for an individual's disposition (pp. 20-21). In short, the ways in which individuals act provide clues for understanding their character and motivations.

The applicability of Dewey's concept of *disposition* to the construction of the gravitation movement is perhaps most useful for identifying the forces and influences at work in the respondents' interest in and desire for building public service careers, both personally and professionally. For that reason, the gravitation movement incorporates the idea of *service dispositions*, which includes numerous factors that could be broadly understood as belonging to a person's *being*. From this point of view, individual movements toward public service can be seen as self-generated rather than the product of forces beyond themselves. This conception is not exclusionary as though service interests were formed in a vacuum. Instead, consistent with Dewey's concept of *disposition*, the influence of external actors and social interactions

referenced by the participants can be understood as working in coordination with the respondents' respective service dispositions as guides in the discovery of their service desires and catalysts for the exploration of their service intentions.

Engagement

At a basic level, the *engagement* movement of the Lens is focused on the general and specific service activities of the respondents. Then, beyond the consideration of the activities themselves, this movement was designed to emphasize the importance and the character of these activities. The activities in which the respondents were engaged, whether personal, preparatory, and/or professional, were not incidental to the process but purposive. They were *sine qua non* to the study. In other words, without the participants' service *actions*, there would be no need to talk about anything else. Additionally, the second movement provides greater insights into value of these service experiences, the respondents' motives for pursuing those experiences, and the significance the respondents gave to their experiences. By doing so, we are able to position the activity of engagement in relation to the other coordinating movements.

To conceive of this second movement philosophically, acknowledgement needs to be given again to the influence of Dewey, especially in viewing the respondents' service actions in relation to the processes that moved them toward their activities. Dewey's discussion of the "reaching" portion of the child and the candle analogy is particularly informative in terms of understanding how the roots of the participants' service actions were found in the active processes that preceded and corresponded with their service activities.

Dewey also provides a framework for discussing the more immediate aspects of the service activities; namely, that they were seen as learning experiences for the respondents. In light of the following, admittedly "lofty," consideration of Aristotle's philosophy, attention

should be paid to the practical nature of the service endeavors in which the respondents were engaged, especially during the preparatory phase of their respective developments. Universally, the service activities of the participants were chosen intentionally and held informative and transformative value for these individuals. Without delving deeply into the panoply of Dewey's works, it may be sufficient to infer that the learning process described in the candle analogy was an essential feature of Dewey's concept of learning.[38] Accordingly, Dewey's theoretical construct is also instructive for the *engagement* movement of the Lens.

Aristotle and the Pursuit of the *Good*

This brings us to Aristotle's contribution to the *engagement* movement. As noted previously, the discussion of Aristotle's perspective on the autoteleological nature of *praxis* (that the activity is an end in itself) within an ethical context provides greater understanding of the motivations fueling the respondents' service activities. With that in mind, the framing of this second movement is indebted to another Aristotelian perspective that is tied directly to the relationship between thought and action and the value of *praxis* in terms of ethics and politics.

When considering the nature of the service activities in which the participants were engaged, we observed consistently that the respondents viewed these actions as having greater significance by comparison to other activities. Simply stated, they were not merely performing "good deeds." They were actively seeking to "do good." Though an argument could be made that prior reflection was needed to determine the "good" in both types of actions, the idea of "doing good" required a conceptual framework that informed the condition of "good." In other words, while the participants were engaged in activities that they viewed as virtuous in themselves, they also were working from a belief that assigned a deeper value to their actions that transcended the

[38] Please see the previous discussion on Dewey's perspective on learning.

events themselves. This consideration puts the spotlight on one of the central features of praxis theory, namely, the relationship between *thought* and *action*.

Returning to Aristotle's conception of *praxis*, the relationship between thought (*theoria*) and action (*praxis*) has had a lasting impact on the praxis discussion for centuries. The dichotomy between these two concepts, which can be seen in other thinkers like Plato and Kant, has been problematic for many philosophers, not the least of whom was Hegel, who criticized the dualism inherent in the separation of *thought* and *action* as "a defect in their systems" (2001/1817, §60, p. 50). Scholarly opinion about Aristotle's perspective on the relationship between *thought* and *action* is not clear cut. While there is broad agreement among Aristotelian scholars that Aristotle saw a distinction between *theoria* and *praxis* (Ackrill, 1978; Adkins, 1978; Dehart, 1995; Lobkowicz, 1967; MacIntyre, 1981/2007; Rorty, 1978; Stewart, 1892), not all scholars believe that Aristotle placed the two ideas in opposition to each other (Dehart, 1995; Lobkowicz, 1967; Stewart, 1892). A closer examination of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*N.E.*) seems to lend credence to the latter position, thus providing a useful philosophical perspective for this study.

One of Aristotle's primary concerns within an ethical/political context is the experience of "the good life" (*eudaimonia*), which is only possible through the thoroughly human exercise of reason. Early in Book One of *N.E.*, Aristotle states, "We have found, then, that the human's function is the soul's activity that expresses reason or requires reason" (p. 17). Human activity enters the realm of the "good" when the virtue of excellence is exhibited. When this excellence translates to a lifestyle, as opposed to individual and specific acts, it can be said that individuals are living a virtuous life of reason, which is the activity of "soul." A life so lived is considered "virtuous" and "good," in Aristotle's eyes. Accordingly, all human activities that exhibit these

qualities serve the greater purpose of manifesting *eudaimonia*, the good life.

Throughout the first nine books of *N.E.*, Aristotle built a case for *praxis* as virtuous activity that reflects the life of the soul. The qualifier of "the good" is tied to his designations of virtuous action versus practical tasks. This is especially evident in his discussion of politics and the actions of politicians, wherein political leaders who seek only their own power and influence may be skillful but not virtuous. Only those who engage in *praxis*, which is action that seeks the good for oneself and for others, are pursuing what is virtuous - a quality to which Aristotle also assigned divine properties (p. 285).

So what role does the activity of *theoria* play in Aristotle's ethical scheme? If *theoria* and *praxis* are separate activities, how are they related? One possible explanation could be found in the logic Aristotle employed in the final sections of *N.E.* While there can be little doubt that Aristotle held an elevated opinion of *theoria*, which he described as the "supreme" activity (p. 284), he may have been focusing on ways of distinguishing the contemplative life from other earthly pursuits (pp. 284-286). The contention that *theoria* and *praxis* are unrelated seems to be contradicted by one of Aristotle's later conclusions toward the end of Book 10. After extolling the value of contemplative activity, especially as a means for gaining knowledge about that which is considered "eternal" and therefore the object of contemplation, Aristotle wrote:

> These considerations do indeed produce some confidence. The truth, however, in questions about action, is judged from what we do and how we live since these are what control [the answers to such questions]. Hence, we ought to examine what has been said by applying it to what we do and how we live; and if it harmonizes with what we do, we should accept it, but if it conflicts, we should count it as mere words (p. 290).

If my interpretation of Aristotle's thought has any merit, then it can be concluded that for Aristotle, the gap between *thinking* and *doing* (at least as it pertains to ethics) may not only be

narrower but may be bridged by the notion that the act of thinking is confirmed in the doing, which points toward a more reciprocal relationship - a vital component of the praxis paradigm.

Pertaining to the interpretive Lens used in this study, Aristotle's use of *ethical praxis* in relation to *theoria* offers another way of framing the activity of the participants. Using Aristotle's framework, we can say that the participants' service activities transcended the execution of acts deemed as "good." They were engaged in virtuous activities that manifested the best of human character, which seeks to serve the common good. At the very least, this safeguards a reductionistic evaluation of the respondents' service actions and assists us in seeing them as serving a greater societal purpose.

Assessment

Though none of the three movements of the Praxis Lens have greater significance or importance than the others, the *assessment* movement may be the most consequential for helping us understand the development of the participants. For in the assessment movement, we learn how the respondents became who they were as active public servants. During the assessment portion of the Lens, we gain insights into the way the participants evaluated their service experiences at all phases of their lives, the importance the respondents assigned to these experiences, and the ways their self-perceptions were impacted by their service experiences. It is also in this movement that we are given the opportunity to observe the transformations the participants experienced as their sense of identity was modified, their confidence about their abilities was bolstered, and their respective visions of mission were clarified. Like the other movements, the assessments made about the respondents' service activities were only subsequent to the previous movements in terms of timing. In reality, the assessment process was initiated before the service experiences began, while they were engaged in those activities, and after their

responsibilities were completed.

Dewey Revisited

The structure of this third movement is most indebted to the philosophical and theoretical contributions of Hegel and Maslow. But before their contributions can be more fully examined, we need to return briefly to Dewey and recognize that his ideas are as applicable to this movement as they were to the previous movements. Drawing one more time from the analogy of the candle, Dewey's description of the process that occurred at the moment of and the moments following the burning of the child's hand points us toward a clearer understanding of the real force of the experience. The lessons the child learned in the moment were not only informative but directive, in the sense that having been burned, the child will choose a different path when a lighted candle is encountered in the future. The assessment movement is reliant on this perspective to a large extent if for no other reason than for the insight it gives us into the ways the participants' service experiences not only gave them a new and expanded understanding of themselves but provided guidance for future actions.

Hegel's Dialectic

The opening statement of this section describing our approach to the philosophers whose ideas provided the substance of the Praxis Lens is perhaps most true for the consideration of Hegel's philosophy. Given the extensive nature of Hegel's writings, a thorough exploration of his ideas, even those discussed below, would require a separate treatment. Despite the restricted nature of the following discussion, the influence of Hegel on the *assessment* movement of the Lens was significant, especially in relation to his modernist understanding of *praxis*. Consequently, key ideas and principles have been identified and gleaned from Hegel's writings

primarily for their conceptual and interpretive value for the framework of the Lens.

Of all the contributions Hegel made to the field of philosophy, perhaps none is more well-known than his *dialectic*. The dialectic has come to be known more popularly as the cyclical process of *thesis-antithesis-synthesis*. Whatever the inadequacies of this modern conception of the dialectic[39], the popular dialectical construct provides an accessible framework for understanding Hegel's method. At its core, Hegel's dialectic approach is driven by ontological and epistemological concerns. As a way of describing how knowledge is conceived and acquired, Hegel asserted an interactive process built on a logical progression. Essentially, the dialectic contends that the process of knowing begins with a thought (idea, concept, category) that contains within it its contradiction (e.g., *being* and *nothing*). In order to resolve the tension between the two contradictory thoughts, efforts are made to find a new conception that holds the two contradictions in tension as both equally true (e.g., *being* with *nothing* leads to *becoming*),[40] which are also tied to his idea of consciousness.

Another crucial aspect of Hegel's philosophy integral to his dialectic method is his historicism. One of the characteristics of Hegel's philosophy that distinguishes him from other thinkers, especially those who preceded him, is Hegel's insistence on situating philosophies and philosophical activity in real-world, historical settings. Unlike many of the philosophers before him[41], Hegel believed that philosophy was more than pure reflection on eternal truths

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[39] The popular construct of the *dialectic* and its current use has drawn criticism primarily for its misrepresentation of the depth of Hegel's philosophical framework (e.g., Bernstein, 1971; Forster, 1993; Kaufmann, 1965). While acknowledging that Hegel never used this construct himself, Forster (1993) believed that Hegel was not as opposed to it as some have suggested (p. 131).

[40] Sources for this summary of the *dialectic* were: Bernstein, 1971; Forster, 1993; and Pinkard, 1994.

[41] This reference is certainly not inclusive of all philosophers. For example, Beiser offers Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* wherein Montesquieu viewed constitutions as products of a nation's history, location, economic conditions, and cultural traditions (p. 270).

contemplated in the abstract and divorced from lived experiences at specific points in time. As summarized by Cowley (2008), “In Hegel’s ontological logic, reality is not separate from our experience - as in the Kantian notion that all that is real or certain resides only in the mind - but appears within it; consciousness is not detached but is always social, thus truth and certainty are inseparable” (p. 2). In this same vein, Beiser (1993) contends that Hegel viewed philosophy “as the self-consciousness of a specific culture, the articulation, defense, and criticism of its essential values and beliefs” (p. 270). Placed within a historical context, philosophy serves a clarifying purpose by becoming, as Beiser suggests, “a weapon to be wielded against its own pretenses and illusions” (p. 271).

Hegel’s historicism emphasizes the praxis dynamics of his dialectic by placing the activity of thought in immediate proximity to action. Thought is itself an activity that is manifested in empirical expressions of consciousness both individually and societally. As such, the act of thinking leads to actions that prompt new observations and reflections. Therefore, as Beiser notes, Hegel did not see *thought* as a fixed state of being.

> [Thought is] a restless activity, a process of development from the indeterminate to the determinate, from the vague to the clear, from the abstract to the concrete. The fundamental premise behind his historical conception of thought is that it is not possible to separate the object of thought from the activity of thinking about it, for it is only through our thinking about an idea that it becomes clear, determinate, and concrete (p. 275).

Seen in this way, both *thought* and *action* are equally mobile and interdependent. Additionally, the relationship between the act of thinking and practical action, for all their progressive qualities, demonstrates a continuum from what was, to what is, to what is becoming. In this way, the past, present, and the future are co-existent at a single point in time.

Despite the abstraction and complexity of Hegel’s ideas, their influence on the Praxis

Lens is ultimately practical by emphasizing the lived and situational reflections of the participants, especially related to their service activities. The process of assessment that was common to all the respondents was not divorced from their service experiences but rooted in and informed by them. The immediate target of their reflection and assessment was, admittedly, their self-perception and not broadly ontological. Nevertheless, throughout their endeavors as public servants, each of the participants experienced an expansion of their individual self-consciousness in real time. Furthermore, the development of their self-identities occurred at all moments of their service activities - before, during, and after. The experiences provided the substance of their self-evaluations, giving them a keener understanding of their service attractions and aspirations and their capabilities and skills, as well as a clearer vision of future directions.

Finally, Hegel's dialectic provided articulation to the transformations that the respondents experienced during their public service journeys. At numerous points throughout their narratives, the participants described the process of *becoming* that was illustrative of Hegel's dialectic. In other words, the participants were not the same people after their experiences. Through their reflections, they embraced the transformation that had occurred as they saw who they could become and were becoming. Granted, in common parlance, this dynamic could be described simply as growth. However, it is important to note that the development observed was not strictly sequential nor cognitive. The people the participants *had* been throughout their lives remained with them even as they became different people. And they did not simply acquire new information but discovered a new sense of identity as they *became* public servants.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The inclusion of Maslow's *hierarchy of needs* into a framework built on the concept of *praxis* may not seem obvious at first glance. However, since the praxis concept involves

thoughtful and reflective action that, in turn, influences the dynamic of thought and understanding, an analytical approach to decision-making processes based on need fulfillment seems appropriate. Though Maslow's *hierarchy* has garnered significant attention since its publication nearly 80 years ago, a brief overview of the theory is in order.

Situated within the field of psychology, Maslow (1943) presented a model for understanding human behavior built on the dynamic of need-based decision-making. Human needs were organized into five basic categories: 1) *physiological needs* - which can be considered basic needs for sustaining life[42]; 2) *safety needs* - related to perceptions of security and stability; 3) *love needs* - socially-oriented needs that revolve around feelings of affection and belonging; 4) *esteem needs* - needs that are "soundly based upon real capacity, achievement and respect from others" (p. 381); and 5) *the need for self-actualization* - the desire for self-fulfillment and the drive to realize one's individual potential (pp. 372-383).

This hierarchy is constructed on the principle of *prepotency*, which refers to needs that have a greater urgency in terms of deficiency. Needs that have a higher degree of immediacy will take priority over the fulfillment of other needs. As Maslow notes: "A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else" (p. 373). Though Maslow (1987) would later clarify his theory,[43] the basic premise in terms of need-based motivation, decision-making, and action is the idea that the pursuit of *higher* needs is less likely to occur until the *lower*, or more immediate, needs are satisfied. Conversely, the more one experiences need satisfaction at the lower need levels, the

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[42] Maslow deliberately avoids providing a list of these needs because of their variability. However, he makes reference to the principle of *homeostasis*, which essentially points to those needs that are required for keeping the body alive (pp. 372-373).

[43] In the 3rd edition of his book, *Motivation and Personality* (1987), Maslow suggested that he may have inaccurately given "the false impression that a need must be satisfied 100 percent before the next need emerges" (p. 69).

freer a person is to pursue the higher needs. In his treatment of Maslow's theories, McLeod (2018) frames Maslow's arguments in terms of "being needs" and "deficiency needs." The four lower levels of need fall into the category of *deficiency* since the driving force for need satisfaction is the acquisition of that which is lacking. As these needs are met, the need-meeting motivation decreases. By contrast, as *self-actualization* needs are satisfied, the intensity of the motivation to meet these needs increases (pp. 2-3).

In a broad sense, the decision to include Maslow in the Praxis Lens was aimed at the quest to understand the motivational factors that lead collegians to pursue careers in public service. In that way, the *hierarchy* serves a more functional purpose. In this same vein, inclusion of the *hierarchy* also provides theoretical connections to the literature of Public Service Motivation (PSM) explored in Chapter One given that many scholars in the field have framed their understanding of PSM in "need meeting" language (Bright, 2009; Christensen, et al., 2017; Clerkin & Coggburn, 2012; Perry, 1996; Vandenabeele, 2014).

When viewed functionally, an argument can be made that Maslow's *hierarchy,* like several of the philosophies explored previously, could be inserted in more than one of the Lens' movements. However, the decision to incorporate the *hierarchy* in the *assessment* movement of the Lens was influenced mostly by the dynamics of *self-actualization* that helped explain an important aspect of the respondents' recollections, namely their drive to be the best versions of themselves. In this way, Maslow's description of *self-actualization* as an individual's need to "become more and more of what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (1943, p. 382) is especially insightful. Furthermore, given the cyclical characteristics of the self-actualization process, it seemed fitting to locate the *hierarchy* in the *assessment* movement as a way of depicting the ongoing process of becoming that the participants repeatedly demonstrated

through their narratives.

Conclusion

The goal of the foregoing discussion was to provide insight into the philosophical forces that helped in the formation of the interpretive approach to this study. Having concluded the examination of these collected philosophical influences, a concern remains that each of the ideas, concepts, and theories explored may appear disjointed or unrelated. However, as noted, all the philosophies and theories selected were chosen for their ability to provide perspective and substance to the principle of *praxis* that ties this interpretive framework together. Despite the segmented consideration of the ways Aristotle, Hegel, Dewey, and Maslow influenced the creation of the Lens, each can be seen as contributing key components of a larger interpretive framework aimed at capturing the dynamic processes demonstrated by the narratives of the participants. Borrowing the perspectives of the philosophers explored, we can identify and describe the ways in which the respondents were drawn to public service, carried out significant service activities, and experienced a continual transformation as they moved toward the realization of their public service ambitions.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The preponderance of research with which this study interacts in both the public service and educational arenas is quantitative in nature. The literature in both fields has provided empirical evidence of a variety of phenomena of interest to this study. As discussed in Chapter One, Public Service Motivation (PSM) research has presented substantive evidence of heightened civic awareness and propensities toward professional public service among individuals working within the public sector. Research in this field has also provided theoretical frameworks for understanding the formation of personal public service motivation, offering reliable clues about leading influencers in PSM development. A similar conclusion can be drawn by engaging educational theory where scholarship in academic curriculum and design has led to greater insights into the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies and curricular designs for college-level civic education.

As may be concluded about quantitative data in general, the previously mentioned research remains primarily indicative in nature, pointing toward the presence of a phenomenon without fully identifying, much less explaining, its wide-ranging dimensions. This conclusion is echoed in Levine (2011) who suggested that the sterile nature of quantitative research ultimately thwarts its practical aims, which he believed are linked to a covert *hope* underlying most quantitative studies, especially pertaining to educational theory. For Levine, this *hope* operates on the belief that "practical programs, when done well, succeed" and ultimately fuels investigations and analysis of the education/engagement dynamic in order to "sort out the effective strategies from the ineffective ones." Yet the hope to which Levine referred remains "largely hidden because positivist social science cannot handle value commitments on the part of

researchers; [treating] them as biases to be minimized and disclosed" rather than methods to be unleashed and utilized as means for broader discovery (p. 18).[44]

Building on the work of quantitative scholars in the fields of *Public Service Motivation* and *civic education* and the resulting scholarship that has created a substantial and significant body of knowledge upon which public administrators and educators alike can draw, this study asserts that more can be known about the overall PSM process, which includes the education/engagement dynamic. By capitalizing on a commitment to inductive research that observes the phenomenon from the "inside", this study offers insights and perspectives on individual experiences, whether pre-collegiate, collegiate, or post-collegiate, that prove valuable in answering the study's main focus in ways that might not be available to even the most rigorous statistical modeling and empirical methods.

For the purpose of review, a brief summary of the primary focus of this study may prove useful. To better understand the larger phenomenon of PSC choices, this study asks simply: *What motivates college/university students to select and enter public sector careers?* Discoveries related to the role played by collegiate experience in an individual's career choice process are viewed as a part of a broader examination of one's public service motivational development during an individual's formative years. Ultimately, application of the findings stemming from the primary research focus is guided by an interest in ascertaining the ways by which a clearer understanding of the dynamics of personal civic formation - both generally and professionally, revealed through the reflections of research participants - can inform higher education programs

[44] The relevance of Levine's positivist critique to this study notwithstanding, it is worth noting that researchers have made strides in broadening the scope of quantitative research that incorporates non-positivist theories and methods. For an example, see Zyphur & Pierides (2019) who offer a snapshot of rigorous debate between quantitative scholars on this issue.

that seek to not only promote civic sensibilities, but design curriculum and programs aimed at preparing college and university students for public service through public sector careers.

As a qualitative study,[45] the research methodology used for this study is *narrative inquiry* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) that focuses its discovery and analysis on the stories of the study participants' individual and collective lived experiences as they have progressed through their formative years, including early adulthood, into the professional realm of the public sector. The stories told by respondents provide the study's data that has been examined and analyzed for the purpose of discovering the meaning each story has "for its author" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 34). As described by Merriam and Tisdale, most narrative inquiry takes either one or a combination of three basic forms: 1) *biographical inquiry* - analyzing stories in terms of the important experiences (life events, and significant turning points), personal characteristics (such as gender and race), and individuals (family of origin, friends, mentors) that contributed to the formation of each study participant; 2) *psychological inquiry* - concentrating on persons and their "meaning-making" thought processes linked to intentionality and motivation; and 3) *linguistic inquiry* - focusing on the use of language (both verbal and nonverbal) that individuals select as they craft their stories as well as the substance of the narrative, including "the events and their sequence of occurrence, the meaning of the actions,

[45] Traditionally, quantitative and qualitative research have operated from different ontological and epistemological assumptions. Quantitative research has tended to hold an *objectivist* view of reality, assuming that absolute meaning can be found independently of human existence and interpretations, and relies on *positivist* (absolute knowledge can be known) and/or *post-positivist* (absolute knowledge *may* be known but knowledge is flawed) methods of inquiry. Conversely, qualitative research tends to approach reality from a *relativist* perspective, focusing on the *meanings* of what is known *relative* to human experience and interpretations. Accordingly, qualitative research leans on a *constructivist* epistemology whereby knowledge is not separated from human perceptions but *constructed* through individual and collective human experiences. Instead of "truths", qualitative research offers *insights* and/or *perspectives*. As observed, the language of "perspectives" is crucial to this study as the primary source of data. Research findings are based on the *perspectives* of interview participants, especially related to life experiences from which participants derive meaning, and on the *perceptions* of the principal investigator that influenced the interpretation of the study's findings. (Help for this footnote came from Houser, 2015.)

and [the story's] resolution" (pp. 35-36). Given the aims of this study, the investigative avenues of biographical and psychological inquiry seem the most apt. From the standpoint of biographical inquiry, attention is given to significant formative and/or transformative experiences, as determined by the respondents, that influenced their respective journeys into the public service arena. A psychological inquiry approach is used to identify specific interactions between significant contributors - be they human, experiential, or otherwise - to the participants' public service motivational complex and how those contributors informed individual PSC decision-making processes.

In terms of research collection methods, the narrative data for this study were collected through face-to-face interviews. In keeping with the essential form of narrative inquiry, respondents were asked open-ended and reflective questions aimed at eliciting stories about their respective journeys into the world of professional public service. The study's primary focus provided guardrails for the interviews, informing interview questions that were designed to afford respondents the freedom to recount their respective journeys into the public sector in any manner they chose.[46] Each interview began, officially[47], with the principal investigator's prompting: "I am interested in knowing the story of how you found your way into your public service career. Please begin your story wherever you think it is important to start. Please include any specific influences, such as your family, education, religion, community, and so forth, any events, and any people you believe were significant throughout your journey." It should be noted that the study's ultimate academic aims influenced some of the follow-up questions, especially as

[46] A fuller explanation of the interview protocols is provided below.

[47] Many of the interviews were preceded by "small talk" or other types of "getting to know you" conversation. In one instance, however, the interview was preceded by a 20-minute tour of the facility where the respondent currently worked. That tour and the corresponding conversation were factored into the evaluation and analysis of that individual's interview.

they pertained to the respondents' individual collegiate experiences. As will be explored below, each respondent was asked to offer specific suggestions for designing curriculum and academic programming for undergraduates that they themselves would consider to be vital for promoting and preparing college/university students for public service careers. In some cases, these suggestions revealed further details about the complex of motivational factors that contributed to their entrance into the public sector.

Research participants were selected based on three primary criteria. First, participants were recruited who were currently serving in public service roles that would not be classified as professions (e.g., law enforcement, fire prevention, teaching) at the time of the interview. In the interest of greater clarity, consideration should be given to the general concept of the *public sector*. Admittedly, volumes have been written on the characteristics and qualifications that distinguish the *public* and the *private* sectors respectively. Considerable variances and disagreements also permeate the literature on the subject. This study relies on some basic (if not simplistic) principles that provide the basis for a consensus understanding of those entities that may be considered part of the *public sector*. In keeping with some of the leading voices in the field, the difference between public and private entities may be seen in terms of an entity's *beneficial function* and *organizational control* (Dahl & Lindblom, 1953; Lienert, 2009; Pathirane & Blades, 1982; Perry & Rainey, 1988; Rainey & Young, 2005; Wamsley & Zald, 1973). Entities whose primary purpose is to provide broad societal benefits with few to no accessibility requirements may be considered *public*. These entities are commonly referred to as organizations, agencies, or other types of institutions that fit the criteria of public entities. In this regard, the government agencies and the non-profit organizations that employ the respondents would qualify as belonging to the public sector. The second principle is perhaps the most

influential for determining an entity's *public* status. The element of *organizational control* is focused more on issues related to leadership, operational administration, financial resourcing, and accountability. Stated simply, if leadership structures, administrative policies and procedures, funding sources, and methods of performance assessment are linked directly or indirectly to the general public, then the *public* label may apply.

Given the parameters created by the principle of organizational control, a question could be raised as to whether apolitical non-profit organizations (NPOs) should be considered as *public* entities. In truth, NPOs occupy hybrid space between the public arena and the private sections of society, earning the designation of *public-private organizations* (Bozeman, 2007; Monsma, 2009; Rainey, 2009; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). This designation is born out in the application of the two principles discussed above. On the one hand, there can be little question that charitable NPOs comply with the first principle. With few exceptions, the programs offered by charitable NPOs provide a highly accessible public benefit thereby earning public status.[48] On the other hand, NPOs operate under the auspices of private stakeholder groups who have influence over (if not direct control of) policy creation, and often exercise oversight over the organization's administration. In this regard, these entities may be considered a part of the private sector. For this study, the *public* aspect of NPOs outweighed the private designation due to a consideration of NPO economics that make the private characterization a little less clear. Across the board, apolitical NPOs rely on contributory funding sources as opposed to capital investments of stakeholders. Furthermore, the "non-profit" designation underscores the belief that private

[48]This principle application may not translate completely to non-profit institutions such as colleges and universities, given the current high cost of higher education. In the case of the study respondent who works for an institution of higher education in the greater Oklahoma City area (please see below), his work was specifically aimed at securing the kinds of charitable gifts that increase accessibility for students who attend or may attend his school.

stakeholders should not profit financially from their involvement in the NPO. In this regard, private groups that govern NPOs are composed of *stake*holders not shareholders entitled to economic reward. Seen from this perspective, an argument could be made that NPOs have more in common with entities and/or enterprises that are considered *public* versus those classified as *private* in nature. For these reasons, respondents who work in the non-profit world were deemed qualified for this study.

The decision to select individuals in non-professional public service careers was influenced by a desire to protect the consistency and validity of the findings. Since many public service professions - such as those within the fields of public education, law enforcement, public health and safety, and legal advocacy, for example - require specific educational "tracks", especially at the undergraduate level, concerns existed about whether or not the respondents' collegiate experiences within "tracked" academic programs might exert a disproportionate influence on their respective public service motivation development and professional actualizations.

The second criteria by which the participants were selected was tied directly to the amount of time that had transpired since the respondents received their bachelor's degrees. Only individuals who had earned their bachelor's degrees no fewer than five years and no more than 10 years prior to the time of the interview were invited to participate in the study. The post-degree time frame was established essentially for two reflective purposes: 1) within the five- to 10-year window of time, justification exists to support the assumption that respondents would have been far-enough removed from their collegiate experience to gain a significant depth of insight for evaluating their collegiate experiences in ways relevant to research objectives and not so far removed from their collegiate careers to forget important details; and 2) the five-year time

frame affords the respondents the opportunity to gauge their level of career satisfaction, presuming that after five years, many of the common challenges and pitfalls of their respective careers would have been encountered.

Finally, respondents were invited to participate in this study if they had entered a career in the public sector either immediately or shortly after receiving their undergraduate degrees.[49] While it was not considered essential that the individuals interviewed still be in the positions they accepted after they received their degrees, it was important that their tenure in public service be relatively continuous since they entered the public sector. This latter caveat was satisfied by every participant, though many of them had experienced two or more changes in job and/or position since they began in public service. It should also be noted that, where possible, study participants were chosen who demonstrated enthusiasm, or "passion" for their service careers. While the enthusiasm of some was noticeably higher than others, it can be confirmed that all communicated a rigorous level of appreciation for, commitment to, and relative professional fervor for their current assignments.

The data were mined from interview recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes taken during the live interviews. While some researchers who use narrative inquiry choose to analyze their participants' stories holistically, keeping each story intact and examining each story individually, this study focuses more on *categorical analysis* that looks for commonalities of experience across stories, and perspectives that may offer abstract conceptions upon which a more comprehensive framework of understanding may be built. The categories into which the various aspects of common experience were organized were shaped primarily by *open coding*

[49] In the interest of transparency, it should be noted that "shortly after" was used at the researcher's discretion with relative latitude. Essentially, anyone who entered the public sector professionally, including uncompensated professional positions, within a two-year timeframe after receiving their baccalaureate degrees was considered eligible for this study.

whereby themes of interest to this study revealed in the interviews were identified. *Axial coding* also proved valuable for determining key aspects that connected the respective respondent experiences to important concepts that arose from the interviews.[50]

Additionally, consideration has been given to my personal service background (albeit church-related and not in public organizations) and life experiences. I have also relied on axial coding to safeguard consistency with my own professional experience in the arena of religious service and my role as an educator. Caution was exercised to prevent imposing my personal priorities onto the data analysis. In line with Levine's (2011) critique, my interest in democratic participation through professional public service was used only in framing and communicating the secondary purpose of the study. Precautions were taken to shield respondents from any interpersonal interactions that could be perceived as over-enthusiastic or zealous of a public service agenda on my part in an effort to prevent undue influence on respondent reflections and perspectives. Any revelations about my professional background, my current career position, and/or the broader implications of my research were reserved until after the interviews were completed.

With further regard for interviewer positionality, the respective environments in which the interviews were conducted were selected in full consideration of the interviewer's age, gender[51], ethnic background, and any potential power structures that might have been perceived. The personal comfort and safety of the respondents was also a primary concern. Subsequently, every interview was conducted in settings where the participants and the interviewer could be

[50] Definitions and functions of open and axial coding were taken from Merriam & Tisdell, 2016.

[51] In terms of gender, care was given to acknowledge each respondent's gender identity. Each respondent self-identified as either female or male. Subsequent pronoun usage adheres to these identifications.

observed while the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents and their responses were protected.

The investigative protocol for the interviews was shaped almost exclusively by the parameters inherent to narrative inquiry. Beyond basic informational questions that are important to this study (such as names, ages, career fields, and years of service), the protocol was designed to elicit meaningful stories from the respondents. As previously stated, interview questions were intentionally open-ended. Follow-up questions were informed by the study's overarching aims but were guided by specific concepts and observations offered by the respondents. Special attention was paid to the turning points mentioned by the respondents and the influences that either contributed or directly led to academic and/or professional changes of direction. In most cases, follow-up questions were prompted by perceived clues about individual self-perceptions related to personality-fit in the public sector. In other words, clarifying questions were often asked whenever respondents discussed their perceptions of fit, whether positive or negative, relative to their public service positions. As might be expected, an additional line of inquiry focused on the influence their collegiate experiences exerted on the participants' career decision-making processes. It should be noted, however, that this was a secondary line of questioning that occurred only after the respondents had completed their public service career path narratives.

In the interest of regulatory compliance, each respondent signed the requisite consent form that explained: 1) the purpose and scope of the study; 2) a request for permission to record the interview; 3) an explanation of how the recording and any resulting data derived from the recording (including field notes and transcripts) will be stored, managed, and eventually destroyed; 4) an assurance of confidentiality and privacy; and 5) the roles played by the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board and the supervising researcher, respectively.

Since it is designed to offer qualitative insights into the dimensions of public service motivational dynamics that may not be immediately apparent within quantitative research, this study is viewed more as a kind of initial descriptive exploration of the PSM terrain. Accordingly, the sample of interview respondents was limited in scope, with a goal of no fewer than 13 and no more than 15 participants. For diversity and convenience purposes, three geographical contexts were selected for participant recruitment: Greater Kansas City, Oklahoma, and Michigan. These locations were chosen primarily for their proximity to my location and network of contacts. Accessibility factors notwithstanding, intentional effort was made to secure the participation of individuals from a broad range of public sector organizations and agencies. Of the 13 eventual participants, four worked in local governments, three held positions with connections to the U.S. federal government, three worked for or operated within state governments, and three were employed by non-profit organizations.

Before proceeding to the findings, it would seem prudent to introduce those public servants who agreed to be interviewed. These participants will be introduced by geographical areas. Each participant's name is a pseudonym, some of which were determined by the respondents themselves. It bears noting that some of the respondents offered no objection to the use of their actual names. However, the decision was made to use pseudonyms as a precaution for protecting the respective identities of the respondents and preserving confidentiality. Appreciation was expressed to those who raised no objections to actual-name references and an explanation of the protective intent of the pseudonyms was provided.

Among the interviews conducted, four involved individuals who worked for city governments within the Greater Kansas City area. Robert L. was a budget and performance analyst within the Budget office of his city. Jacob P. also served as a budget and performance

analyst for his city's Department of Public Works. Julie R. was the current assistant city manager in her town. And Michael R. held the position of budget manager for his city's government. A special debt of gratitude is owed to these individuals who were the first participants to be interviewed, and therefore had a profound impact on the form, substance, and execution of the subsequent interviews.

The five interviews conducted in Oklahoma reflected perhaps the widest range of public sector responsibilities, involving individuals from within the non-profit, state government, and federal government arenas. Cade C. was an administrator at one of the Oklahoma City-area colleges/universities whose primary responsibility was institutional advancement and donor relations. As a policy analyst for the state of Oklahoma, Raegyn H. served primarily in policy development. One of the study's more atypical interviews involved Sean M. who was a civilian serving as a logistics specialist and program manager within one of the branches of the U.S. Armed Services.[52] Another interviewee with federal government connections was Wade M., who served on the senior staff of one of Oklahoma's congresspersons. The remaining Oklahoma interviewee was Raj R., the only respondent who served in both the state and federal government realms as a program manager in a state-run office of a federal government agency.

Finally, the four Michigan participants were either staff members of state government agencies or program directors within their respective charitable non-profit organizations. The individual whose career journey had the most chronological miles was Tiffany B., who was a case manager for a state government agency.[53] As a program director for a non-profit

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[52] In the interest of full disclosure, Sean (a former classmate of mine) exceeded the 10-year ceiling at the time of the interview. However, since his recruitment began several months before the interview, I decided the study's aims would be well-served by his experience.

[53]While meeting the parameters of the study, Tiffany, the oldest of the respondents, was a non-traditional college student who earned her bachelor's degree several years after she graduated from high school.

organization concerned with alleviating hunger, Lucia C. traveled the state of Michigan extensively, working with her organization's numerous agricultural partners. Another case manager for a state government agency was Melanie M. who had worked for the state for most of her post-collegiate career. The final Michigan participant was the previously mentioned tour guide, Shay M. who served as the Director of Community Relations and Volunteer Recruitment for a charitable non-profit organization that invests considerable resources in community development and restoration within neglected urban areas.

As will be seen, these individuals provided a wealth of information. I found their stories both intellectually stimulating, inspiring, and personally gratifying. I am grateful for their contributions to this study and to my life personally.

Table 1
Quick Reference Chart of Study Participants

Name	**Location**	**Type of Organization**	**Job Title/Type**
Tiffany B.	Michigan	State Government Agency	Case Manager
Cade C.	Oklahoma	NPO - Higher Education	College Administrator
Lucia C.	Michigan	NPO - Charitable	Program Director
Raegyn H.	Oklahoma	State Government	Policy Advisor
Robert L.	Kansas City	City Government	Budget & Performance Analyst
Melanie M.	Michigan	State Government Agency	Case Manager
Sean M.	Oklahoma	U.S. Military - Civilian	Logistics Specialist
Shay M.	Michigan	NPO - Charitable	Program Director
Wade M.	Oklahoma	U.S. Government	Field Dir. for Congressional Rep.
Jacob P.	Kansas City	City Government	Budget & Performance Analyst
Julie R.	Kansas City	City Government	Assistant City Manager
Michael R.	Kansas City	City Government	Budget Manager
Raj R.	Oklahoma	U.S./State Government	Program Manager

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The exploration and analysis of the study's findings is a journey of discovery through the assorted narratives of the participants. In keeping with the narrative character of the findings, the following discussion is itself intentionally narrative in style. The Praxis Lens used to interpret the findings provides a basic structure for this analysis. The design of the discussion borrows from a metaphorical image of terrain surveyance, where the perspective progresses and narrows from the viewpoint of a plane flying overhead, to the heightened vantage point, to the view from ground level. The intent of the discussion is to provide the reader with a "feel" for the findings as much as a cognitive understanding of the data gleaned from the respondents' narratives.

The View from 30,000 Feet

In January 2006, at the beginning of the spring semester of his freshman year at the University of Oklahoma (OU), Raj was not completely sure where he was heading in terms of his academics or his career. He came to OU with the thought of becoming a veterinarian, but now he was second-guessing that decision. "I thought for a long time I would go down the pre-med path and go to vet school," Raj explained. "I mean, animals were kind of my passion. But there were some things that pushed me away from [that path]. I didn't think that it would maybe be a good fit." Referring to the time he spent volunteering at the Tulsa Zoo during his junior year in high school, Raj continued, "I just felt like I was too connected to the animals, and [so were] the other people I worked with. It was hard on them when an elephant who they had worked with for 20 years passed away." The more he thought about spending his life in that field, the more Raj became convinced that being a veterinarian was not for him.

But finding a new direction was a challenge. "I kind of bounced around between ideas, but nothing felt right about them." One of the classes on his spring semester schedule was a

political science course taught by the president of the university, Dr. David Boren. Sitting in that class, things began to change for Raj. “His stories kind of resonated with me,” Raj remarked. “He kept [talking about] the importance of serving the greater good. Slowly, I began to think that political science could be for me. That’s what drove me down that path.”

Sitting across the table from me in the restaurant where we met, Raj seemed eager to tell me his story. I was grateful for the time he had blocked off from his busy schedule as a program director at a state-based federal crisis management agency, where Raj was realizing many of his public service ambitions, which began long before that spring day. “The thing that really clicked in my head to guide me to public service was the fact that from a very young age, I had this desire to do volunteer work,” Raj recalled. He continued to speak about his youth and the different influences that fueled his internal drive to make a difference in the world.

> I have a sister who is five years older than me. When I was pretty young, she volunteered at St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa and different places as she grew up. I don't know if I just wanted to kind of be like her, or I just kind of had a passion for it, but I really always wanted to volunteer for whatever reason at different places. So, when I was fairly young, my parents talked to one of their friends who was a doctor and had a private practice in Tulsa. Over the summer, she let me come to her office, [do filing], and whatever I could around the office. I was too young to go other places, but it was something for me to do and enjoy. It was like I had a purpose.

That sense of purpose was not restricted to Raj and his sister. According to Raj, a commitment to service, whether public or personal, was a part of the *ethos* of his family and the Indian-American community of which he and his family were a part. Raj remembered fondly the example of his mother. “My mom would - and will still - literally drop anything she's doing to help out somebody else, and she kind of always taught me and my sister to do the same thing.” Like his mother, Raj noted, “I always enjoyed kind of helping out and helping others. And I still

do. I don't want this to sound arrogant, but a lot of my friends . . . they know they can call me, and I'll be like, 'Whatever! I'll come over Saturday and I'll do it.'"

Beyond their willingness to provide service to the people they knew, Raj's family took pride in their legacy of public service that traced back to their home country of India.

> My mother's dad was actually involved in government work in India. He was a high-ranking official in one of the states there as [my mother] grew up. I've heard stories from her about him, who passed away when I was in second grade. We would go visit maybe every other year, but I didn't really get to know [the family] very well, except from hearing a lot of the stories. Mom told me about her life growing up with a father who worked in the government. My parents were born at the same time India [had gained independence] from the British. So, it was a whole new government. Everything was being established and changed. It was kind of an interesting time.

Though he did not have any details about his grandfather's role at the time, Raj was fairly confident that his grandfather had been a part of creating an independent Indian state.

The community pride and political activism of the Indian-American community in Tulsa also left its mark on Raj. "I remember as a kid growing up in Tulsa, there was an India association that was very active. They decided to organize a big 50th anniversary celebration of India's independence in the mid-1990s, when I was young." Raj remembered the impact that event had on him. "That kind of guided me into the political science path."

Once he had settled on pursuing a degree in political science, Raj took full advantage of the educational opportunities available. In addition to his coursework, Raj sought out practical experiences that would help him learn the "ins" and "outs" of public service. Those experiences gave Raj a lot to think about as he contemplated his future in the public sphere. During his junior year, Raj applied for and was accepted into a summer internship program in Washington D.C., working in the office of a member of Oklahoma's congressional delegation who was, "coincidentally" (as Raj pointed out), the son of the university president.

> I applied to all the Oklahoma [congressional] representatives, and he selected me. He was the first one to call, so I accepted before I heard back from anybody else because I just wanted [to make sure I had] something. I spent the summer of 2008 up in Washington, D.C. working for him. That was pretty interesting. It wasn't how I'd imagined it would be - you know, from what you see on TV. [I saw] how the capitol works. But it was a good dive into public service - taking phone calls, reading and answering letters, drafting letters, things like that.

This first experience with professional public service left Raj with a much clearer picture of the character and nature of work in the public arena. “I got to see what public service is really about - the issues that matter to people, not something I’d ever thought of.” Raj observed the congressman’s commitment to the people he represented, no matter the issues being faced. Despite Raj’s own perceptions of the issues at hand, the congressman’s approach did not waver. Raj observed, “It's important to one person - this constituent, and he has to respond to that letter. I mean, I guess he didn't have to respond, but he did respond to those letters, you know, to show that their opinions mattered.”

Immediately after completing his internship, Raj was exposed to a different kind of public service experience as a part of a summer course he took through OU. The course was conducted at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado.

> We were there for two weeks. The first week was pure learning, essentially coursework on site in Denver, with the class. But during the second week, we actually attended the convention and just kind of watched that process. So, I went from D.C. to this huge convention, and I was really kind of embedded. I kind of liked it, you know, the culture. Everybody was so excited about it. It's like people seemed to have a passion when they were there.

Though he did not say so explicitly, it seemed clear to me through the energy with which Raj recounted his Denver experience and the fondness he expressed for the people he encountered there, that Raj felt a sense of kinship with those he met and interacted with at that convention.

During his final year at OU, Raj engaged a service opportunity that would prove to be one of the most pivotal in his professional public service journey. In addition to recounting significant events in this chapter of his journey, Raj also revealed some of the service values that mattered the most to him.

> I had applied for and was accepted into a program called *Community Scholars* through the Carl Albert Center at OU. I got a position in the mayor's office for the City of Norman. They actually kind of let me pick and choose my projects, what to do, what was important to me… The direction Mayor Rosenthal gave me was, "What do you want to do?" I picked up with a green initiative [the city had started] and began looking at where the city could improve. It interested me because I was always saying things like, "Do your duty. Recycle things to make the world a better place." When I spoke to the utilities director at Norman, I didn't realize that the city actually benefited from individuals who recycle, because when we recycle aluminum or cardboard or whatever it is, the city gets a reimbursement for some of those items… It also saves the city a lot of money, because [these materials] aren't going into the landfill, and they have to pay a landfill fee by the ton. So I kind of thought it was interesting that it's not only pro-environment, but it's also positive for the community you live in…My understanding is they still [operate] and have expanded that program since I left. Anyway, that kind of got me involved with actually doing something, and contributing to something, which just kept validating my decision [to pursue a public service career].

Besides the formative and instructive impact of his Community Scholars experience, Raj's time with the City of Norman brought him to an intersection that would lead him to his eventual position in state/federal government. As graduation approached, Raj was planning on taking the summer off, relaxing and working odd jobs before continuing his educational preparation through the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at OU. His plan changed, however, when a new opportunity presented itself.[54]

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[54] Apart from editorial concerns, much of the bracketed information in the quotes referenced throughout this analysis, beginning with the following quote, represents details from the interviews that have been redacted for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality and preserving the anonymity of the respondents.

> My senior capstone class was actually with Mayor Rosenthal [who taught at OU] and the office I currently work for. We secure grant funds from [the federal agency in charge] and sign them over to cities across the state for emergency preparedness and response. And the City of Norman was receiving one of those grants. The [individual who was the agency director at the time] mentioned to Mayor Rosenthal that he had a couple spots open in his office and, if she knew of any grads, he hoped she would recommend them and have them come in to interview. So after completing my capstone class in early May right before graduation, I submitted my resumé, and they emailed me back to come in for an interview. I went in for the interview, thinking *I'll just see how this goes*. It was just kind of intriguing, you know, the people that work there, their mission, what they do was kind of interesting to me. The whole [agency] perspective was unique. And the whole idea of working there was just kind of interesting to me. So they called me back for a second interview and told me, "Here's what you'll be doing if you accept the position." I put some thought into it. They gave me the weekend after they made the offer. I was like, "Sure, let's do this." I was excited about it. And I took the job. I started in mid-June of 2009. I went ahead and started the MPA program that fall at OU. I never felt like I made the wrong decision in any way. I was excited. I enjoyed the job.

Though he acknowledged that the experience of beginning a career while also going to school full-time was, at times, overwhelming, Raj realized that it was all a part of growing up. He found the work rewarding, and Raj excelled. Following the election of a new Oklahoma governor in 2010, changes were made in the office where Raj worked.

> Our director at the time left and we had a staff member who was promoted to director. He remains director to this day. He moved me [from a support role] to a position as a [program] analyst - which was something I desired once I got there - working with the state fusion center, which is housed at the Oklahoma Bureau of Investigations. And that really kind of interested me because it was government work, but I felt like I was playing a role. Not that the work I was doing previously wasn't pertinent, but I could now see immediate impact on things. We'd receive tips from across the state - this crime happening or this suspicious activity - and use that information to piece together that puzzle. [If the investigation] results in nothing, that's good! But if it results in something where we actually prevented a crime from happening or deterred something, then I felt like I actually accomplished something that day.

Once Raj received his MPA, he was given the opportunity to take on broader responsibilities at his agency, leading him to the position he held at the time of the interview.

The lunch rush at the restaurant where we met had died down. But even at its height, Raj seemed oblivious to the commotion. He was focused on sharing his story. Taking another sip of coffee, Raj leaned forward, eager to tell me more about the developments that led him to his current role. As I reflect on our conversation, I remember that, through his body language and demeanor, Raj was communicating that he "felt at home" in his career. The sense of pride and satisfaction he appeared to derive from his public service profession were not only reflected in his comments, but "written on his face."

> I moved from that analytical position to a program management position as a critical infrastructure manager for the state. Now, I am in charge of the [agency-wide] program for the state that looks at all critical infrastructure. So, basically, anything you can think of as critical infrastructure, from entertainment venues, bridges, dams, pipeline, oil - which is big in our state, buildings, etc. I kind of run that show as a one-man shop… I also run the continuity of operations program for the state for all state agencies. It's challenging a lot of days because there are a lot of state agencies. There's a lot of stuff that can happen all at once, and it kind of all just falls on me. But I feel like it's really worthwhile. Interestingly, it's kind of like satisfaction in an unsatisfactory way. We see a tornado hit Moore[55], for example, but then we see the agencies [that step in to assist]. And I help create their continuity of operations plans and implement those. We can actually help save lives when they do what they're supposed to do and provide services they're supposed to provide.

Reflecting back on his time in government, Raj concluded:

> I've always kind of found it fulfilling to be in government work. I've had the opportunity to go to private businesses in the past. I've been offered positions, but always kind of shied away, because even though the salaries they offered were way higher and way better, I just wasn't sure. My friends who work in the private sector - just the stress they have in their everyday jobs - I just don't feel they get the satisfaction out of what they do like I do, at the end of the day. That kind of

[55] A city outside of the greater Oklahoma City area.

> validates my choice, picking public administration. Going into the public field was the correct choice.

A Closer Point of View

While remarkable, the story of Raj R.'s journey into the realm of career public service is not atypical. Even though the particulars are unique, the participants' accounts share many of the same patterns and processes observed in Raj's story. But what were those patterns? What processes can be observed in Raj's story and the accounts of the other individuals interviewed for this study? Furthermore, what do these processes tell us about the ways people like Raj and others are motivated to devote their careers to public service? For the remainder of this chapter, I will both illustrate and elaborate on the developmental patterns observed across the interviews (see Figures 1 and 2). As a reminder, the developmental cycles observed in the participants' stories involve three cyclical movements that occurred throughout the respondents' journeys. These movements correlate with the Praxis Lens and are labeled accordingly as: 1) **gravitation** (*being*) - the participants' attraction to and movement toward service activity that was rooted in their personhood; 2) **engagement** (*doing*) - the participants' involvement in service activities - whether personal, preparatory, and/or professional - that are aimed at both realizing their service aspirations and fulfilling a greater purpose that lies beyond themselves; and 3) **assessment** (*reflecting/becoming*) - the participants' evaluations of their service experiences, grounded in their service dispositions, that influenced self-assessment and decision-making. The praxis cycle was observed occurring at both a macro and a micro level throughout the timeline of the participants' lives. Their respective and collective cyclical development was set against the backdrop of the three phases of the respondents' narratives: 1) the **origination phase**, the period of time during which their public service sensibilities were ignited; 2) the **preparation phase**, when the participants intentionally pursued both academic and experiential learning that would

equip them for their public service careers; and 3) the **realization phase**, when the respondents entered their chosen fields full-time and their respective career service goals began to materialize.

The findings are focused primarily on the developmental cycles that occurred during the phases of the participants' lives. The phases are outlined first, to capture the timeframe of the respondents' lives and second, to provide a context for their developmental processes.

FIGURE 1 – Developmental Cycles

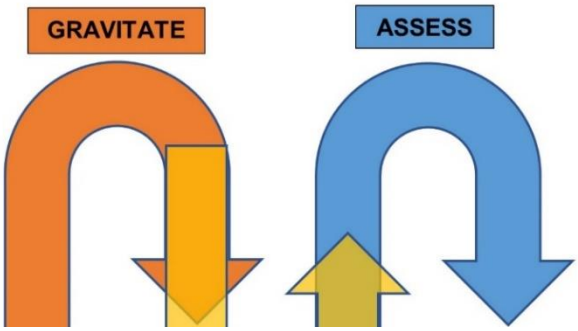
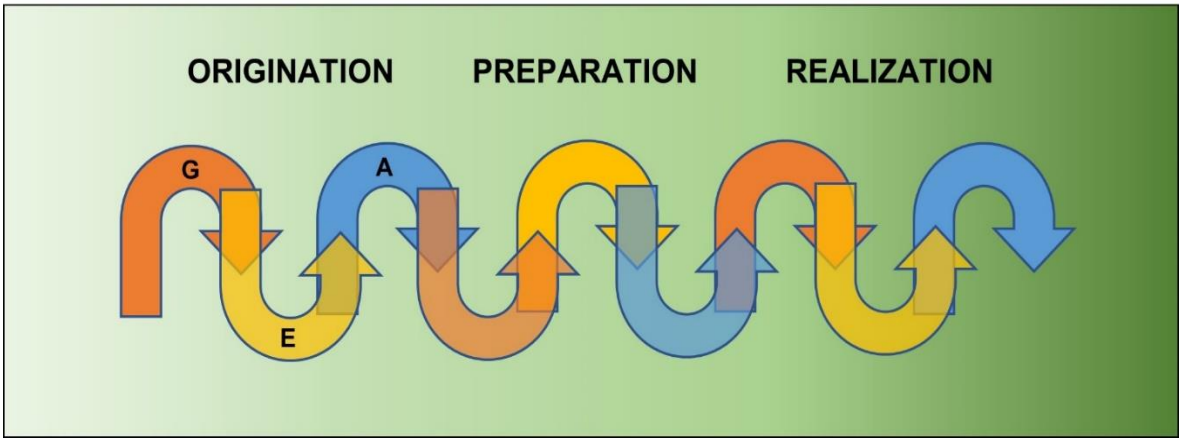


FIGURE 2 – Phases of Professionalization



Additionally, the sequential presentation of these cycles is not an argument for a linear and/or a clearly defined encapsulation of the participants' developmental movements. Rather, it is offered as a conceptualization of the observed dynamic movements the respondents made as they evolved into the professional public servants they had become.

In the following sections, I will illustrate the cyclical development of the respondents by taking a closer look at the accounts of three other participants whose stories reflect the same types of developmental movements seen in Raj's story. These accounts will be contextualized within the three phases of the participants' professionalization journeys to demonstrate the progressive character of their respective developments. In the final section, I will offer a more in-depth analysis of the specific developmental patterns by outlining and discussing three observations that address this study's research question, namely, the motivational factors that led our participants to choose public service careers.

Development During the Origination Phase

One of the participants whose story I found fascinating was Shay M., a program director for a community-based charity in Detroit, Michigan. We met at her organization's facility and spent a little over an hour together, which included a 20-minute pre-interview tour of her organization's building. Even though she would later claim that she was not at the top of her game that day, Shay's enthusiasm was apparent. It was almost as if she could not stop herself from being excited about her work. Like Raj, Shay, whose community of origin was in the greater Detroit area, grew up in a family that prized service to others.

> My family has always been into service - just giving back and blessing those around us. I remember back when I was probably six- or seven-years-old, my family would go out near Christmas time, or on Christmas Eve, and pass out hats and gloves, blankets, and food to those in need - the homeless around downtown when [the weather] was bad. [This was] when downtown wasn't what downtown is today. We would go out and just bless people and pray with families or whoever was out on the street. So [service] was something that my parents instilled in me and my siblings from, you know, a very, very young age.

The community in which she grew up, and the care her family had received from service agencies, also made a lasting impression on Shay.

> When I was a baby, my dad was incarcerated [for a time]. He was arrested for something he didn't do. And we were blessed as a family by a nonprofit organization called Angel Tree…that would give [Christmas] gifts to kids whose parents were in jail. So from [the time I was] a baby, we were blessed through the public service of a nonprofit organization. Luckily, my dad was found not guilty in the trial, and he was able to come back home with us. But from that day on, he and my mom vowed to be part of Angel Tree. So through my church [which had partnered with Angel Tree], my parents took on the Angel Tree ministry. As a church, we adopted families at Christmas time to give them gifts. After that, I would say I was just sucked into it.

Shay embraced the service ethic modeled by her family. She described the way that she was drawn to service, even before she thought of it in professional terms. Her passion for public service remained and was evident throughout our time together. "I didn't choose to serve. I think service really chose me," Shay declared. "It is just something that I love. I love giving back. I love giving my time to those who need it." From the time she was a child, Shay's love of service grew the more she was involved in service projects, especially the projects where she was able to partner with her parents. As college approached, Shay began to entertain the thought of a career in the non-profit world.

> In high school, I was part of the National Honors Society, and one of our pillars was service. We would go out and do after-school tutoring for kids who needed it. We did cool Christmas events. We gave gifts to kids who didn't have anything. And then from there, I knew that I wanted to do something volunteer-oriented but didn't know exactly what it was.

Her career plans would come into sharper focus throughout her years in college and some of her early professional experiences.

Another interesting interview was with Sean M., a civilian logistics specialist with a branch of the U.S. military. Since Sean and I had known one another from our time at OU, we decided to begin our meeting more informally. We met at a restaurant near downtown Oklahoma City and became reacquainted over a delicious meal. The dinner conversation provided some

valuable insights into Sean's personal life, that helped inform the subsequent interview. Even though it was Oklahoma in June, the heat was unusually moderate that day, so we decided to retire to the restaurant's patio for our conversation. We settled at an outdoor table under a large black umbrella. Despite Sean's easy-going demeanor, his excitement about relaying his professional story was apparent.

For Sean's family, public service was a way of life. Sean grew up in a military family. Given his family's background, it was not surprising that Sean was now in military service, even though he was a civilian.

> I'm from a family with lots of military service on both sides. A grandfather who was a marine in World War II. A grandfather who was in the Navy. My dad was in the Navy during the later years as Vietnam was winding down and in the Philippines. My dad was also a police officer for a period of time before I was born. So public service has always been present in some capacity, especially through military service.

Despite his desire to contribute to the family legacy, Sean's health issues closed the door on conventional military service early in his life. "I was born relatively healthy but with some physical ailments that wouldn't allow me ever to join military service. I'm hindered physically in both knees. So, early on, I knew that wasn't going to be an option, even though it was something that appealed to me due to our family history."

Even though he was physically prevented from military service, Sean was driven to find other forms of public service that gave him a sense of purpose. As Sean put it, "I was driven by a sense of mission that's absolutely a lot larger than myself. That really drew me." Like other respondents, Sean recognized that his inner drive to make a larger contribution to the world had been a motivating factor throughout his life.

> Although I wasn't able to do it [through the military], I wanted to contribute in some other capacity. I remember putting that on a cover sheet to a resumé early

> on. I've always kind of had this yearning to provide some type of service, or support to a particular effort like public service or supporting military services. It's always been there, just informed from family history…And my parents were always supportive. They didn't have anything in mind like they wanted me to be a doctor or anything. But from an early age, they were absolutely supportive. They knew I wanted to contribute to something bigger.

Perhaps more than any other respondent, Sean's references to "something bigger" were expansive in scope as evidenced by his academic interests, which pulled him even closer to realizing his professional public service goals.

> I grew up with a lot of interest in international affairs, specifically, U.S./Soviet relations, Cold War type stuff, and, oddly enough, even Russia, before it was [just] Russia…It was like I was just inherently drawn to it from a relatively early age. [My interests] weren't so much driven by domestic politics nearly as much as all the dynamics between nations. When I was introduced to international relations, I loved it! ... [That interest] was my initial driver for [choosing] political science.

Another individual whose personal understanding of service and the concept of a public service career were heavily influenced by his home environment was Michael R., a budget manager for one of the outlying cities in the Kansas City area. I was put in contact with Michael through a college friend of mine who had been the mayor of Michael's city for close to 20 years. With coffee in hand, Michael and I settled into a secluded booth at a local restaurant, and he began to tell me his story.

Like others, Michael's family put a premium on public service. As an example, Michael pointed to his grandfather.

> I never met my grandfather, but I heard stories about him. He didn't go to college, didn't have a college degree, but he worked to help better the community that he grew up in. For a large part of his life, he worked for a savings and loan, not to make money, but to provide people with the means and the capital to build homes and start businesses or get a loan in case there was some sort of family emergency or [situations like that]. He served as the president of the savings and loan for a very long time. Though he didn't really make a lot, he was, in his own way, trying

> to improve his community. He dabbled in other things, too… But I think what he enjoyed the most was the savings and loan and helping people get money to better their lives.

The commitment to service that characterized his grandfather's life was also modeled by Michael's parents who were engaged in public service professions. His mother was a teacher for several years before deciding to return to school to earn a degree in Occupational Therapy. Beyond attempts to help individuals regain the skills they needed to rejoin society, Michael was impressed by his mother's true intent, which was "trying to make sure that people are doing what they CAN do, that they feel good about themselves, and they feel good about their impact on the community. [No matter their professions], she wanted to make sure the people are happy and feel they're a valued member of the community."

In addition to his mother's influence, Michael was perhaps most impacted by his father, who was the city manager of his small hometown in the northern hills of Missouri. The influence of his father's example on Michael's public service journey was unmistakable. In fact, though Michael did not discuss his involvement in service activities before going to college, he spoke like someone who saw himself as an extension of his family's service priorities. This was particularly true of the work he saw his father doing. In his father, Michael came to see the true nature of professional public service.

> I got to see that [my father's career was] unlike other jobs, where you leave your job, and you typically get to move on with your life and go home and be a private citizen. Whenever [my father and I] would go to the grocery store for a gallon of milk, for example, a quick trip would turn into a two-hours long trip because he would get stopped by 10 different people asking, "Hey, I saw that there was a fire truck on Elm Street. What was that about?" Or "Hey, there's a pothole in my neighborhood that needs to be filled." Or "Hey, what happened to that store that closed? What are your plans to get it reopened? What are you going to do about that?" That was constantly happening, and to me it didn't seem like that was different from anyone else, because that's all I really knew.

Given the relatively small size of the community where Michael grew up, many of its residents knew Michael and were aware that he was the city manager's son. This included his classmates. "I kind of tried to explain to the other kids what my father did. I would say, 'Well, he's sort of like the mayor, but he's also kind of like a CEO. He gets paid and he works on the administrative side of things and does the things that the council wants him to do' was kind of my answer." Michael made the point that a lot of his own identity was formed by being the city manager's son, which he later appreciated.

Because of his father's position, Michael's path toward a public sector career was complicated by the same kinds of thoughts and feelings that are common to many young adults as they consider their future careers. "Growing up, you don't always know if you want to follow in your parents' footsteps," Michael remarked. "I don't know that it was consciously or subconsciously, but, you know, you just kind of think, *Well, that's what my dad did, and I'll blaze my own path doing something else*." Despite his youthful urge to chart his own professional course, Michael added, "As a kid I always enjoyed the idea of making my community better. I always thought that being a lawyer, choosing a major in pre-law would be an option for me." But as he began his collegiate education, Michael was unsure about his career direction. Though he could trace the specific moments in college when the pieces of his eventual career would fall into place, Michael did not finally settle on his professional path until shortly before his graduation from Rockhurst University in Kansas City.

Development During the Preparation Phase

The preparation phase for each of these individuals was characterized by educational and professional exploration. It was a time of searching as they tried to find a career path that was right for them. For Sean, the logistics specialist, finding that path was an outgrowth of his

personal passions. As he discussed his time as an undergraduate at OU, Sean seemed to indicate that he was driven primarily by a determination to complete his political science degree. The most formative aspects of Sean's collegiate experience occurred through his studies. In addition to, and as a part of, his coursework, Sean continued to feed his interest in international affairs.

> I actually liked learning the field, learning some theories behind it and actually learning some of the history. History is one of the areas I enjoy. I took courses on U.S./Soviet relations during the Cold War, Russian history, post-Soviet Union Russian history, Russian politics. My minor was actually in Russian before changing to international area studies. I had never really [been attracted] to local politics, like city or state government. It just wasn't there for me. I don't know why it didn't appeal to me so much. And what makes it even funnier is that I decided to pursue [a degree program] where, typically, you see folks in city government, city management, nonprofits, things like that.

Unlike most of the respondents, Sean did not discuss any service learning experiences he had as an undergraduate. But an internship opportunity he received after graduating proved pivotal for Sean's journey toward his eventual public service destination. After receiving his bachelor's degree in political science, Sean explored graduate programs, including the MPA program at OU.

> I knew I wanted to do something, but I hadn't quite found it yet. And then an opportunity arose. It was an internship program that allowed me to get my foot in the door on the civilian side of [a branch of the U.S. military], and that really appealed to me. I would scour job listings for opportunities like the one I eventually found. I don't know if I was so much driven by serving in some capacity for a military organization or not, but I gravitated towards a lot of those listings more so [than others]; not so much Social Security, HUD, VA, things like that. It wasn't just about looking for a GS job, period. What appealed to me was serving in a different capacity. Like I said, I didn't quite pinpoint that it had to be military. I don't know if bigger is the right word because all those other missions are absolutely critical.[56] So it just must have been something that clicked with me on some level and played more of a motivational factor for me. So, when I got

[56] Though Sean did not finish his thought at this point, the context of his comments indicated his desire to find a place of service that was broad in its scope and focus.

> that job, it felt like I found what I was wanting; serving a mission. [It was] something that I had been kind of striving for.

During his time as an intern with the military, Sean enrolled in the MPA program at OU and continued his studies that would further clarify his public service goals and assist him in securing new roles as his career continued to unfold.

Similarly, though as an undergraduate rather than as a graduate student, Michael, the city government budget analyst, continued to refine his professional interests through his educational exploration. Despite his admission that he was hoping to find a professional path that was his own, Michael recognized that his interests seemed to move him closer to a career in the public sector with every turn of his collegiate education. Though, as an incoming freshman, he was still planning on a law career, Michael chose to major in political science. But as he continued his studies, Michael began to see the appeal of other academic concentrations that would eventually lead him to an important decision about his future.

> It was probably about my sophomore year of undergrad that I really started to enjoy some business classes that I was taking. So I went to my advisor and said, "I think I like business administration and want that to be my major." Unfortunately, at that point, I had sort of missed the window of getting all the prerequisites completed before graduation because Rockhurst required a pretty significant number of hours to get a degree in business. My advisor said that I could stick around for another year to get [my business degree] or come back and do a fifth year MBA, which was about the same amount of time. He told me, "You'll [be able] to get your Master's in Business Administration [in a year] because you're gonna have enough classes to qualify for the MBA program." That seemed like a good option. I could take the necessary MBA classes and continue on with my political science track as well. So senior year, [when students] are applying to graduate schools, I thought, *Do I do a fifth year MBA program at Rockhurst, or do I apply for pre-law?* I did a pros and cons list, looking at the attributes of both pre-law and the MBA and kind of what I liked about both of those things. As I'm looking at my pros and cons list, it dawns on me that the overlap [between the two fields] is really public management; that I could really

> get into public service and the kinds of things that I saw my father doing. And I realized at that moment that I should apply for an MPA program.

Later in the interview, Michael interjected more details about this turning point in his life. Though he acknowledged the influence of several pragmatic concerns, such as finding the right program, nailing down his post-graduation placement, and making sure he could pay the bills, Michael realized that he was dealing with weightier issues.

> Even though I kind of enjoyed the idea of pre-law and business, there were aspects of both I didn't like. What I didn't like about business is the cutthroat mentality, selling people on goods even though they don't need them. A profit-over-the-betterment-of-society kind of a thing. I was also pretty cynical about the law [profession] because people are simply trying to find some kind of loophole instead of arguing about what should happen. [Lawyers] end up arguing about winning cases even if it sort of goes against the character of the law. So, I thought: *Well, you know that's what public service is.* You get to have those aspects of business administration, but you're also helping to manage [needed resources]. And instead of doing that for a for-profit company, it's for individuals who are like-minded who want to serve their community and make it better.

Once he saw the issues clearly, Michael applied for and was accepted into the MPA program at the University of Kansas (KU). The irony of his decision was not lost on Michael. With a heavy dose of sarcasm, Michael recounted an important phone call. "I called up my dad and said, 'Hey, guess what? I'm applying for an MPA program.'" Even as he remembered the humor of the moment, Michael's demeanor spoke volumes as he discussed this specific turning point in his life. He seemed to communicate a sense of pride as he came to terms with his decision to follow in his father's footsteps. "I got accepted to the KU program, and that's what sort of triggered my 'aha' moment. It may have been a little bit late, but I sort of realized that that was really what I enjoyed, what I wanted to do, even though it was the same thing my father did." As he chuckled, Michael concluded, "But that's not a bad thing."

Like Sean, the most formative experiences of Michael's collegiate career were primarily curricular. When asked about the aspects of his college education that he found most applicable to his current responsibilities, Michael focused mainly on his intellectual growth and the development of important practical skills.

> Since Rockhurst is a liberal arts school, it was more about trying to help [students] develop their own way of thinking. And so, I think the coursework that helped me the most was the coursework where we had to learn how to empathize with different points of view. I think that is critical in local government, because if you can't understand or empathize with multiple people and their different points of view, then you'll never be able to find common ground, and you will never be able to work together.

Michael also talked about the courses where he acquired the technical knowledge on which he currently and regularly relied for his work in city government, such as basic economic theory, ethics theory, budgeting, and the relationship between economic principles and public policymaking.

When discussing the practical learning experiences that had the biggest impact on him, Michael mainly on the hands-on learning he received through his MPA program at KU. However, he did talk briefly about his undergraduate involvement in community service projects organized by his university.

> The Rockhurst motto is "Young men and women serving others." That was very much what Rockhurst is about: creating men and women who have the ability to analyze, think logically about ways they can give back; really [what the motto says], building men and women for others. It wasn't just coursework. Every year they would do a community project where they take students [into the community] to work with different nonprofits - to do repair work or any kind of work that nonprofits need some manpower to complete. I think in that way they were trying to help us see that there were some areas where we could help.

Continuing to reflect on the formative impact of those experiences and how they informed his current work, Michael observed:

> I think [those projects] increased our exposure to different areas of need. I think serving with different organizations was very helpful, especially when it comes to creating policy when you need to get stakeholders around the table. You need to know what type of organizations are out in your community. And one of the best ways to do that is to go out and volunteer your time to work with those organizations. [They provide much needed support] because local government can't do it all. There are only so many dollars. Most of the time you create partnerships to get things done. And so you have to have those connections. You have to understand the driving force, the mission, of those of those charitable organizations and nonprofits, and their skills. What do they bring to the table? You have to be able to understand their strengths and weaknesses and to be able to bring those things to bear on critical issues.

In terms of professional development, the practical learning Michael gained during his MPA program was indispensable for preparing him for his eventual public service career. During his first year in graduate school, Michael secured a part-time internship in the municipal government of one of the cities on the Missouri side of the greater Kansas City area. This position later morphed into a full-time internship that fit perfectly into his MPA program. Michael did not provide much detail about the work he did through these internships. But they certainly left their mark on him.

> That’s where I got the skills and knowledge to work in government. One key thing [I learned] is that every city is different. The dynamics of every city are different, even state to state. The laws are quite different. Whether you're working in Missouri or Kansas or Iowa or Florida or California, you have to be flexible to adapt to the different laws and ordinances and expectations of what the government should be doing.

Apart from their educational and practical value for Michael, these experiences confirmed his decision to enter the world of professional public service. And the lessons he learned during these internships would prove to be vital as Michael transitioned into his career as a full-time public servant.

In comparison to the other respondents, the preparation phase for Shay, the non-profit program director, was possibly the most extensive. While the particulars of her story were truly captivating, it was her determination to find the right service career fit that most impressed me. But that process took some time and included many educational and professional twists and turns before she finally found what she was searching for. When Shay enrolled at Michigan State University, she, like a lot of incoming freshmen, was not sure about her academic direction.

> I didn't know what I wanted to major in. So, I took a couple classes my freshman year in different majors. And what stuck out to me was one of my Urban and Regional Planning classes. And that's what I ended up majoring in. I think I declared my major sophomore year. From there, I fell in love with the major. I still didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, because it was a lot of planning and policy and city roles and all of that. And I was like, *I don't know if I love THAT.*

Even though Shay was unclear about the connection between her major and a career, she later clarified that the aspect of her academic program that she loved were the community engagement efforts she was involved in and the insights she gained through the program's practical learning experiences.

> I would say they did a great job of giving us hands-on direct service experience. In fact, you couldn't graduate without getting hands-on. So, when we were out working with nonprofits, with local churches and organizations, and working with their planning teams, we saw the back end; we didn't just see the outcome of [the project we were working on]. We saw a lot of the planning process where we sat down with teams who are already working on a specific project…and tried to figure out the problems in the area, and how we can solve them; how we can work with them to actually solve those real problems. And it was the best experience that I have ever gotten, seeing the real issues that occur on the back end.

At the same time Shay was finishing her undergraduate studies, the prospect of a new career direction began to take shape in her mind.

> One day, this random thought came into my head. My dad and I were watching an NBA game and an *NBA Cares* commercial came on. You probably know that *NBA Cares* is a community initiative, like their community outreach platform.

> And I'm like, *That would be a dope job!* I thought it would be cool to be able to work in sports, which I love, and give back that way. So I told my dad, "When I graduate from college, I'm gonna work for a pro sports team, doing some type of community relations work."

Upon graduation, Shay's plans did not immediately materialize, so she found a job that would allow her to apply some of her education while staying engaged with her city, though ultimately, she found it unfulfilling.

> So I graduated from college. I didn't get a job in the NBA or anything like that. But I started working with Quicken Loans, where I worked for about four years. And I was on the community outreach team there. I kind of helped coordinate the volunteer services that our specific team would do. But [after a while], I was like, *I have to do something more beneficial than just sitting on the phones all day and only getting a chance to do that fun community work at random times.*

Shay's dream of doing community outreach work through the NBA did not go away, and she began working to make that dream a reality, first by enrolling in the Masters of Sports Administration program through Wayne State University in Detroit. "I thought, *What better way to get there than to get my master's degree?!*" Shay explained. That step set in motion a series of extraordinary events that Shay believed were providential. It began with a thank you e-mail to the president of Quicken Loans, who is also the owner of the Cleveland Cavaliers professional basketball team. An e-mail exchange led to an invitation to shadow the Cavaliers' community relations team. Through that contact, Shay learned about, applied for, and was accepted into an internship program with the community relations arm of the Detroit Pistons basketball team. The part-time internship evolved into a full-time internship. After a year, Shay was hired as a full-time member of the Piston's community relations team.

Though Shay enjoyed the two years she worked with the Pistons, she began to see that her work was not as far-reaching as she had hoped.

> I was super excited, getting to know the players, getting to know other people in pro sports. It felt like a dream. But later, I realized, *I love it. I love the hype of it. But I don't feel that I'm doing real meaningful community work, working face-to-face with the community.* Although I had my dream job, I kind of felt almost discouraged. I kind felt like I had let myself down, because, you know how you get into the hype, and you're like, "I'm working for the Pistons!" But I felt that, for that type of platform, we should be doing some super dope work. What we were doing was "cute" community work. We should really be IN the community, not just checking a box. Like, we gave presents to them, but are we following up with them? How are their lives being transformed? I realized that I wanted [to see] that long-term sustainable change, which I didn't really see being done in pro sports. That's when I knew [the Piston's job] was only temporary for me.

While the preparation process for Shay was not confined to a classroom or academic program, her experiences gave Shay a profound education that would help mold her into the kind of public servant she wanted to be, eventually leading her to where she was when we met.

Development During the Realization Phase

The final chapter in all of the respondents' stories was only final because it is where their journey narratives concluded. In truth, the realization phase was occurring at the time of our interviews and would continue to occur beyond the time we shared together. For the sake of classification, the beginning of each the realization phase correlates with the period of transition during which the respondents moved from a time of career preparation into full-time public service positions. During this phase, the respondents began to realize many of their long-term service ambitions. This transition period was particularly evident in Sean's story.

Entering the world of full-time public service after college was a fairly short trip for Sean. The internship program in which he was involved during his first year out of college led to a full-time position in the same logistics division. The experience he had gained as an intern prepared him to step in immediately and take on new responsibilities. As a logistics specialist, Sean worked in multiple capacities, eventually leading to a position of program manager around

the time he completed his MPA degree. As he spoke, it was clear to me that Sean had found the right career fit.

> From the moment I was first in the door, I really enjoyed what I was doing. The impact I knew I was having, though I was still learning the ropes. You could see the impact, and that just really appealed to me. I was very mission focused, I guess. By no means is it the same as putting on the uniform and serving, but I was providing support in some capacity… I was exposed to a lot of different operations, and the impact those operations had, and I loved it because I could actually see the impact [for the personnel in the field]. There was actual tangible stuff [as simple as] they did not have a certain capability yesterday [and today they did]. We were able to deliver something that they needed. And that was a huge motivation for me… Being a part of that is pretty special for me. And so, I have never seriously entertained thoughts of doing anything else, because I just really enjoy what I do.

At the time of our interview, Sean continued to serve as a manager of logistics programs that did not require military leadership.

Compared to the circuitous route she traveled to arrive at the threshold of her public service career, Shay's transition into the arena of professional public service was also relatively direct. Eventually, the previous decade of educational and professional experiences paid off for Shay. Once she had her epiphany about the shortcomings of her community service through the Detroit Pistons, Shay began looking for a place where she could begin the kind of service career she desired. "I was actually applying for different jobs while I was still at the Pistons," Shay noted. "I wanted something more face-to-face with the community." Around that time, Shay received a phone call from an organization she had worked with while she was with the Pistons.

> We worked very closely with a lot of nonprofits, and I saw the work that they were doing. I saw kids change right before my eyes, because I stayed in contact with a lot of the nonprofits that we worked with just to volunteer and, you know, just be engaged with them. [During that time] is when I met the CEO of [her community-based nonprofit]. We would give them free tickets [so they could] bring some of their kids out to a game. They were one of the groups we stayed in contact with. A couple years after I had met the [NPO's] CEO and his wife, they

> had a job opening. And they randomly called me. They're like, “Hey, we're hiring someone to handle our youth and volunteer efforts. Would you be interested?” In my head, I'm like, *Absolutely!* But I didn't want to sound too excited. So, I asked them to send me over the job description and let me see if it's something that I would like. I read the job description, and it was perfect! They asked me to send them my resumé, and they’d set up an interview. So, I had my interview and got the job. And I’ve been there now for about a year.

Shay noted that the work she was doing was exactly what she had been looking for, even though there was room for improvement.

> I certainly feel like I’m still scratching the surface. I'm still kind of figuring it out, just because we don’t do any programming in the youth engagement piece. We’re still working with nonprofits to make sure they have children [in their programs]. So, I'm not actually doing the direct work that I would like to do. So, I know that I'm still knocking on the door of what I'm supposed to do. But I'm definitely getting closer and closer. In fact, right now, I'm actually creating a platform for [our organization] to create programs. So, I would like for us to do some type of youth programming, where we are working with kids [ourselves] to get them to the next level, whether it's through career exploration, field trips, mentoring, or things like that. We're actually working as a team to create that platform.

Given the determination Shay demonstrated throughout her professional journey, I had no doubt that those programs would become a reality, if that has not already happened.

For decidedly practical reasons, Michael’s public service career began much farther from home than he had planned.

> Typically, governments trail the private sector by about a year, a year-and-a-half, to two years. And so, when the recession hit in 2008, you know, local governments didn't really feel the pinch till about 2010. And it took a couple of years to really come out of it as well. And so, when I graduated from my MPA program in 2012, the job market was still tight. There weren't a lot of municipal areas that were hiring, particularly entry level jobs. So, there was an opportunity to get a job in Florida in [one of the small cities] in Palm Beach County. I said, “You know, there are worse places to go for a couple years than Florida!” So, I packed up and moved down to Florida. [Though it started] as an opportunity to get a job, I enjoyed my time down there.

While still important, the pragmatic considerations that led Michael to Florida were not his primary concerns when the time came for him to find a new opportunity two years later.

> I wanted to move back to the Kansas City area where my family and my fiancée (now my wife) were, as well as her family. And I wanted to go to a city that really had strong community ideals, the culture, the philosophy, where I could learn and grow and become better at my job. [This city] is known in the public service industry as a leader. So I applied and was lucky enough to get the job. I really enjoy working for [this city]. Not only is it the culture, and the staff, and the leadership of the council, but it's also the citizens. They are very supportive of their government…because they see the results [and the benefits] that they get out of it. It's helpful to have a community that will back you when you try new initiatives and give you the benefit of the doubt when trying new things. In some cities or other government situations, they can't do that.

At the time of the interview, Michael was still serving in the position he was hired to fill five years before.

Though the narratives of every respondent culminated with their current service positions, their reflections about their current roles and the paths they took to arrive at their current destinations were revealing. That is certainly true of the three individuals we have just encountered. Returning to my conversation with Shay M., it seemed apparent to me that her years of professional disappointment contributed to a profound sense of satisfaction with the work she was now doing.

> I like it when people are smiling. That means we're doing what we're supposed to be doing. Because, in essence, you want people to be happy. You want them to feel the love, and you want them to feel the vision and the mission behind the dirty work that we're actually doing. So when you see that people are smiling, you know that they're happy. This [community in Detroit] is an area that has been oppressed for a long time. They don't have a lot of resources; they don't have a lot of hope. So when you do see the smiles, you know that they have hope and that we're moving in the right direction.

The “smiles” Shay referenced and the visible impact her organization was having on both the individuals and the community they served continued to fuel her devotion to service, even on “bad” days.

> You get that extra boost every once in a while, especially when you see kids who are [thriving]. I have this one kid who is in a couple of different programs in the building.[57] He used to be nervous to talk, like wouldn't talk at all. And when he did speak, he would talk super, super fast because he was nervous. So, now when I see him, he's like, “Hey, Miss Shay, how are you?” And it's just a breath of fresh air. Every time I see Charles, I know we're doing what we're supposed to be doing. Because this kid wouldn’t even look you in your eyes while talking to you. Now he's asking, “How's your day going?” And he’ll tell you about his day. You can just see him growing right in front of your eyes.

Through all of her experiences, especially during her time with her current NPO, Shay had learned a lot about herself and the true nature of public service. Toward the end of our conversation, Shay summarized her beliefs about public service. “It's about sharing love. I feel that it’s about just being as selfless as possible and knowing that it’s not all about me. This is the main thing that keeps me going.”

During my time with Sean, I was honored that he entrusted to me such a close up (though veiled, for obvious reasons) view of his world. Time and space preclude me from going into all the information Sean provided about the work he did. He was very detailed in his descriptions of his many responsibilities, speaking almost gleefully at times about things like “PME - professional military education” and “FMS - foreign military sales.” He detailed some of the

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[57] Given Shay’s comments about the lack of youth programming through her organization, it may be helpful to understand how her NPO worked. They would make a six-year commitment to a specific depressed community within Detroit by purchasing a large facility at the heart of the community. They would renovate and restore the property so that it could become a kind of community center. Then they partnered with government agencies, area NPOs, businesses, and even entrepreneurial ventures (which Shay’s NPO itself would help facilitate), who would lease space at low cost in and run their programs/businesses out of the NPO’s facility, providing needed services and economic opportunities for the surrounding community.

places he had been and some of the foreign leaders with whom he had worked, which coincidentally were leaders in some of the same countries he studied in his international relations program. Sean described the positive relationships he had built with military personnel who moved in and out of his office based on their service rotations. He discussed the impact of inspirational officers, some of whom became his mentors. As evidenced in his comments, Sean took great pride in the fact that he was serving a global mission.

> There is something about contributing to the capabilities [of our service personnel] around the world. I guess I'm more internationally minded. That's how I see my public service. Whenever I am supporting [service members] it is gratifying. It's like, "Man! I did a lot today. I actually delivered the asset XYZ to a field location that truly needed something to continue their operations." To me, overall, that's just service. A mission that's absolutely a lot larger than myself. That really draws me, and always has, as my wife constantly reminds me.

Because much of Sean's work is project-based, he has been involved in a lot of different aspects of the logistics efforts of his specific branch of the military. As noted earlier, he had gradually taken on more responsibilities that gave him greater influence over key program-related decisions. While noting that he did not get to enjoy the same level of immediate gratification he received when he was working more at the ground level, Sean valued the current opportunity he had to make a bigger impact.

> I have a seat at the table now, though it's not a big seat. That comes with a lot of responsibility. You have to get used to taking fire. That's just a part of what happens as you progress. You're going to be trusted. Your opinion carries weight, especially when [the people in the room] know your prior accomplishments. And you can carry that with you. Your reputation follows you, you know? Fortunately, as far as how my experience has gone, it's been very good. Even in those uncomfortable moments when we [have to figure out what went wrong], when we're like, "Why did we do this?", it's rewarding to be in the room and have some say. And that's another motivator for me. A lot of the [people I work with] push me to excel, because these guys are very serious about what they do, and they strive to do it the best they can every day. And I'm working to support [their efforts], especially in those challenging times.

When I asked Sean about his future plans, he added to his comments from earlier in the interview, indicating that he was there to stay.

> I have no intention of getting out of serving the military branches. I definitely do not have an immediate desire to leave [this branch of the military]. I think this is what I want to do - operate in this capacity to some degree. Long range, outside of a bigger paycheck type stuff, I do want to get into senior leadership so I can affect more change, eventually. Even though you have to deal with more bureaucracy [in a leadership role], you can see [the bigger] impact you can actually have. Having a slightly bigger stake in a certain position, and working for the good, you can actually affect more change. You have more power to wield. So, yeah, I'd like to take on a senior leadership position, which is not too far off from what I'm doing now, in all honesty…I'd like to end my career able to say I had a hand in accomplishing something good and something that has a long-term positive impact. All in all, I just like what I'm doing. I like the mission of supports and knowing that I am contributing to something much bigger than myself.

Of all the respondents, Michael R. was one of the most philosophical as he reflected on his career, especially as he considered the ways his work embodied the essence of public service. He demonstrated a strong commitment to the people of the city where he served. Interestingly, Michael never discussed his reasons for choosing a career in city government. Given his family background and his father's example, municipal service may have been a foregone conclusion for Michael. Whatever his reasons, Michael's assessment of effective public service was decidedly city focused.

> Public service is about growing a community and making it better tomorrow than you found it today. And that is, to me, where I get the most pride and the most enjoyment out of what I do. Whenever I [overhear a conversation between residents] saying something like, "I can't believe this road got redone," or "It's so much better now that we have this new sewer treatment plant," I know that I'm hearing people talk about something we did that they are enjoying. They may or may not know about all the work that went on behind the scenes to get that done. But I get to see people realizing the benefit of [our work] in their lives. That's the enjoyment. Because some people won't always say it to you, but you can see it in

> their faces if you just walk around and watch people enjoy the city they live in. That to me is critical.

For Michael, public service goes beyond people just doing their jobs. For him service is about an attitude and a way of life, something he saw modeled by his father.

> The idea of public service is that we're here to help others and lead by example. Maybe an example is doing things that aren't a part of your job description. You go out of your way to help people. You make sure that regardless of whether or not they've reached the right person or you have the ability to help them or not, you make sure that you can give them the right resources that they need, even if it's not local government. Sometimes people call and what they need is the county office. So, you follow up with that person to make sure that they got the help that they needed… Ultimately, it's about leadership through service. And so, as things happen, you help in a variety of ways. I recall, there was some serious flooding one time back home. Now my dad was the city manager, but he didn't work in Public Works. But they were [stacking] sandbags…to contain the flooding. And it was a time-critical thing because the rains were coming. So, he went out in a suit and tie, and he started sandbagging. And, you know, I think that's leadership through service, where no matter what it is you're doing, if you're called upon to help, whether you're looking at policy or you're out there in the trenches stacking sandbags, it's on you. You're it.

When considering the aspects of service that Michael found most rewarding, he spoke about his role as a facilitator - making sure that all the different parts of the city government have the resources they need to do their work. He mentioned the satisfaction he felt whenever he was able to bring different parties to the table and accomplish big tasks, or working with sister cities, sharing ideas that make a difference in policy and program. In the end, Michael offered the following summary in a way that was characteristically honest.

> People often talk about service in terms of sacrifice. But, to me, I think a lot of people get into public service because they enjoy it. And while you're doing it because you want to help others, you get some enjoyment out of it yourself. So I think it's not quite as selfless as people make it out to be, because you enjoy it. I'm in public service because I enjoy it.

As we concluded our conversation, Michael offered a significantly optimistic assessment of the future of public service.

> I would tell anybody who possesses the kinds of things we've talked about - anyone who wants to work to find their "why" - that public service is for them. People often talk about Millennials, the younger generation [in negative ways]. But I've found that one of the things about them is that they actually want to know their "why." They want to work for a company or for an industry that has a purpose. And if they're looking for a purpose, what more noble purpose is there than public service? People want to try to help their fellow [citizens]. They want to connect to their communities. You can do that in the public service world. And so I think the future is bright because people want to know their "why" and have a passion.

In my mind, Michael was describing himself, which was appropriate. And, for me, it was a fitting conclusion to a memorable conversation.

Motivational Factors in Sharper Focus

The principal aim of this study was to gain some insights into the reasons recent college graduates choose, prepare for, and subsequently enter careers in public service. With that primary focus in mind, what conclusions can be drawn? After reviewing the participants' public service narratives, both individually and collectively, what have we learned from this group of public servants that may add greater dimension to our understanding of the motivating factors that influence individuals to seek professional public service? The analysis of the respondents' stories has yielded three primary observations that provide some answers to these questions. First, the participants' choice of a public service career was rooted in and emanated out of their internal lives. Second, the participants' professional service was fueled by nonmaterial rewards they received from their work. And third, public service fulfilled the participants' deepest and highest-level personal needs. The following discussion offers a more in-depth examination of each of these observations, as summarized in Table 1. Each observation will be analyzed by

applying the Praxis Lens outlined above as a way of expanding our understanding of the participants' developmental processes and the motivators that played a key role in their professional public service stories.

Observation One: Intrinsic Service Inclinations

One of the most significant findings of this study centers on the observation that the participants' service orientations, including their public service career choices, were deeply intrinsic and rooted within their inner being. Stated plainly, a life of service, whether personal or professional, was a part of who these people **were**. The intrinsicality of their service inclinations was observed consistently throughout their stories as demonstrated through the three motivators discussed below. Using the stories presented earlier in this chapter, supplemented by references to the interviews of other participants, we will take a closer look at the different characteristics of each motivator and the role they played in the participants' professional journeys.

Table 1 – Research Conclusions

Observations	Intrinsic Service Inclinations	Service-based Reward Perspectives	Service-oriented Need Fulfillment
Praxis Relationship	*Gravitation *Engagement	*Engagement *Assessment *Gravitation	The total praxis cycle applies, though assessment plays a significant role.
Characteristics	*Dispositional Motivators -Pro-Social Impact Drive -Public Service Ethic -Embedded Service Interest	*Experiential Evaluations *Nonmaterial Rewards -Service Satisfaction -Achievement Gratification	*Service-directed Strategies *Self-Discovery Process *Self-Actualization through Service (Maslow)

Before delving deeper into an analysis of the participants' intrinsic motivations, I want to clarify my approach to the issue of *intrinsicality*. First, my aim is to simply describe what I observed as I interviewed the participants and analyzed their interview transcripts. I am cognizant of the potential to view conclusions about our participants' inner being as statements

about their inherent natures or static personas that may have deterministically restrictive, if not prescriptive, ramifications. Any conclusions of this sort are not intentional. More than anything, I want to convey the idea that these individuals were attracted to public service in ways that were not coerced nor forced. Neither were the participants' service inclinations based on convenience, as if public service was the path of least resistance.

The participants' attraction to public service emanated from the core of their being as a significant aspect of their personhood. Key to this analysis is the additional observation that the characteristics detailed in this discussion appeared irrespective of personality. In other words, these individuals, who displayed a wide range of personality traits or qualities (however one chooses to describe *personality*), commonly exhibited the characteristics under review. Furthermore, I am not attempting to explain the reasons our participants were the way they were nor how they came to be that way. While an understanding of the phenomenon helps explain some of the reasons the participants entered the public arena, the goal in this analysis is primarily descriptive, providing support for the study's conclusions. I begin with the characteristics observed and offer a description of the qualities of the participants' service inclinations so that certain assertions can be proposed. It is for these reasons that I lean heavily on Dewey's concept of *disposition* (1922) discussed in Chapter Two, which focuses on the dynamic and multifaceted internal processes that influence people to lean in specific attitudinal and behavioral directions. As Dewey suggests, I am inferring certain observed motivational dynamics based on the respondents' statements about significant developmental events in their lives. In keeping with Dewey, the following discussion focuses on these characteristics to which I will refer as *dispositional motivators*.

To better understand the dispositional motivators around which this first observation revolves, let us return to the praxis cycle discussed above and consider first the *gravitation* movement of that cycle. The goal of describing the initial movement of the praxis cycle as *gravitation* is to communicate the idea that these individuals were drawn to and took steps to move toward acts of service - both momentary and sustained - which led them into the second movement of *engagement*, during which the respondents actively participated in service endeavors. Whether personal or professional, our participants had an affinity to provide service to others and they *gravitated* to it as persons. As portrayed in the accounts offered above and supplemented by other respondent references, three common dispositional motivators deserve attention: 1) a pro-social impact drive; 2) a public service ethic; and 3) an embedded service interest. A more focused exploration of each motivator reveals some key reasons the participants' gravitated as persons toward service.

A Pro-Social Impact Drive

In simple terms, the *pro-social impact drive* could perhaps be best summarized as the participants' pressing ambition to have a positive impact on society[58]. The expressed desire to "make a difference" outpaced all other motivational influences in terms of respondent references. In total, the respondents referred to their *pro-social impact drives* 94 times (an average of over seven references per interview). The respondents would reference their pro-social desires in numerous ways throughout their narratives, representing the importance of the drive's impact at different points in their lives. As was noted in the accounts of Raj, Sean, and Shay, a few of the

[58] The word society was used by the respondents in both general and specific ways. Throughout the interviews, the meaning of the word was relative to the topic being discussed. Society could have been defined as their respective communities or the metropolitan areas where they lived and/or worked. Generally speaking, however, respondents tended to take a more philosophical tone when discussing their pro-social desires, most often referencing society in the broadest terms possible.

participants made a point to emphasize that they were fully aware of their pro-social desires as children. For these individuals, this drive seemed to be a part of who they were for as long as they could remember. This was true of other participants like Melanie M., who was a case manager for one of the social services agencies of the state of Michigan. She recognized early in her life that she "wanted to fix people;" a desire she referenced frequently throughout her interview. Another illustration of this in-dwelling pro-social drive was offered by Lucia C., the program director of a food-based Michigan nonprofit. Lucia recalled feeling envious of her friends who attended a different elementary school that conducted regular service projects. "That wasn't available in the religious school I attended," she noted. "I always wanted to go and do service projects… I always wanted to engage and help people." As discussed below, this drive was evident at other points of Lucia's story.

Though the number of respondents who discussed a youthful awareness of their pro-social impact drives was limited, several others acknowledged in retrospect the longstanding presence and influence of an abiding pro-social impact drive since they were young. As noted previously, Michael realized later in life that his identity growing up was closely aligned with the public service roles filled by both of his parents. Another respondent who recognized the impact of her pro-social drive was Julie R., the assistant city manager from one of the suburbs in the Kansas City area. Upon reflection of her precollegiate plans, Julie realized that her desire to make a difference in the world had influenced her thoughts of pursuing a career in law, though she eventually chose a different academic path. Another participant who linked his pro-social impact drive to his youth was Jacob P., a colleague of Michael, who was a budget and performance analyst. As a high school student, Jacob decided to learn more about the living conditions of people in other parts of the world. During the interview, Jacob remembered the

way the efforts of agencies and organizations seeking to improve the lives of people in need resonated with him and helped him clarify his own personal and career ambitions. “I saw a world that wasn’t like my own,” Jacob observed. “It made me rethink my priorities to the point that I didn’t want to just work for me. I wanted to make this world better than I found it.”

As was evidenced in the previous stories, the pro-social impact drive was instrumental in the professional decision-making processes for many respondents. For example, Raj gravitated toward internships and positions where he saw the potential for positive impact, even changing his plans accordingly. Similarly, the different turns of Shay’s sojourn were precipitated by her desire to have an impact in troubled communities. The value of the pro-social drive for people like Raj and Shay was also seen in others. As he reflected on the crucial turning points in his career trajectory, Cade C. talked about the importance his pro-social impact desires played in guiding him into his current field. Cade, who was an institutional advancement administrator at a college in the Oklahoma City area, recalled “jumping at” the opportunity to work in the advancement office of his alma mater, the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (USAO). Despite his interest in politics, Cade had concluded that being a career politician was not for him. When he was presented with the offer to join USAO’s advancement team, Cade remembered thinking, “This might be the thing that I could do that has the same feeling that I think politics does, which is that you can change a lot of peoples’ lives!” As he settled into his role, Cade observed that his initial feelings about the potential impact of his work were confirmed as he interacted with the individuals who benefitted from his fundraising efforts. “I would meet those people, and I could see the impact it made on their lives,” Cade exclaimed. “I love that there was such a direct connection between what I did every day and the people whose lives were a little bit better because of it.”

As was seen in the initial accounts discussed in this chapter, the drive to have a positive impact on society not only carried the respondents into their careers but it also played a major role in keeping them there. This was especially evident in the ways that Raj, Sean, and Michael talked about the work they had done and were doing. Basically, had they not determined that their work was making life better for others, these three men would have chosen different professional paths. The same is true of people like Jacob, Julie, Cade, and others. In addition to influencing the respondents as they continued to chart their career paths, the pro-social impact drive contributed to a type of criteria the respondents used in their assessments of their work and their professional decisions. This criteria ties into the rewards of their service, which is discussed in the second observation below.

A Public Service Ethic

Closely related to and arguably intertwined with their intrinsic pro-social impact drives, the participants also possessed a strong public service ethic. Conceptually, this motivator encompasses respondent references to a kind of code of conduct by which many of them operated. Though only one respondent (Michael, as described below) used actual code language, they regularly pointed toward a kind of oughtness that was normative for both their personal and professional lives. In the interest of clarity, respondent references to a normative standard of attitude and/or action that was linked to service as compassionate (one's awareness of need), empathetic (a personal association with need), and/or caring (an impulse to alleviate the need) were interpreted as reflections of the respondents' public service ethic.

The public service ethic that the respondents embraced was most evident in the variety of ways they talked about the value of service, both generally and professionally. In a general sense, the ethic was observed anytime a participant spoke about living a life of service, which revolved

around the values detailed above: compassion, empathy, and care. Active service to others was normative in their lives. We can see this in Raj's comments about how he and his family - especially his mother - lived to help others, and how he continued to prize himself on being someone his friends could always count on for help. Both Sean and Shay described how they constantly looked for opportunities to serve, which had a determinative impact on their career choices. Others, like Lucia, pointed toward a service norm that regulated their service attitudes and actions. Throughout her interview, Lucia referenced her consistent pattern of finding places to serve no matter where she was. Whether she was looking for ways to aid her childhood neighbors, doing her part at her elementary school by translating for Spanish-speaking students[59], or seeking service opportunities in high school and college, Lucia was constantly on the lookout for a chance to help others.

Other indications of a service ethic were observed in the way the respondents spoke about their work attitudes. Though the contexts were professional, these references provided a display of a service ethic that was deeply personal. Examples of this can be seen with both Raj and Sean who demonstrated a commitment to excellence that is an expression of their service ethic. The fact that both men had been promoted to positions of broader responsibility within a relatively short timeframe spoke volumes about the quality of their work that was recognized by supervisors and peers. To further illustrate this point, Sean took time during our interview to discuss the relationship that existed between civilians like him and military personnel. "That relationship could be strained, at times," Sean noted. "Because there were some people in similar

[59] Since her father was from Columbia and her mother was from the U.S., Lucia grew up in a bilingual (Spanish- and English-speaking) home, and she spoke Spanish fluently. As an elementary student, Lucia would make herself available to teachers and administrators who needed assistance communicating with Spanish-speaking students, especially students who were new to the school. Lucia saw this as a way to make the new students feel welcome in her school. As she stated, "I saw it as one way that I could do something good and to help. I was very proud that I could help in that way."

positions [to what] I had, who would dial it in or go on autopilot. They wouldn't do anything more than [the bare minimum]." But Sean's mission-centered approach to his work often won over the military staff who saw that his service convictions were equal to their own.

In addition to the more personal demonstrations of their public service ethics, many of the respondents applied a service ethic to their work as a basis for framing their beliefs about the public's expectations of service agencies and organizations. Put simply, several participants viewed the relationship between public servants and the people they served in terms of their public service ethic. It was also instrumental in establishing the criteria they used to determine success. Returning to Michael's comments about the nature of public service, we can see his public service ethic as he referenced his convictions about service leadership and the standard of "going out of your way" to better the lives of others. For Michael, these kinds of attitudes and actions should be the norm for public servants. A similar opinion was expressed by another of Michael's city government colleagues, Robert L., who was also a budget and performance analyst. Throughout his interview, Robert spoke of his concerns about the ways constituents think about their governments. It was clear to me that Robert applied a service ethic to his own work as well as to the efforts of his city's government. "My goal is that when people walk into city hall, or even just have an interaction with a city employee or a thought in their head about the place where they live, or when they think of the word government, that they feel good about their reasons for living in this city," Robert declared. "[I want them] to know that they're being listened to or they're heard, and that someone cares about them at that level." It should be noted that Robert was not alone in that conviction

Concluding this discussion of the participants' public service ethic, we should briefly consider the formative influences that helped them shape their service codes of conduct. As we

saw in the initial stories, this ethic was often influenced by family members and/or communities-of-origin. For Raj and Shay, an ethic of care was modeled constantly in their homes. In Sean's home, the family's history of military service meant that service was not only a personal responsibility but a patriotic obligation. In Michael's case, we could argue that the service ethic was much more caught than taught as he watched the example of his parents who demonstrated public service as a way of life. Other participants talked about the ways the service attitudes and actions of family members left on imprint on them. For example, Melanie's mother, who was a teacher, modeled service in a way that left an indelible impression on Melanie. The same was true of Julie, who talked about the example of her mother (also a teacher) and her cousin who was a leader in her community. Another respondent we have not met yet, Raegyn H., talked about the atmosphere of her home where her parents consistently connected public service with political participation. Arguably, this family trait had a long reaching effect on Raegyn, given the fact that she worked as a policy analyst in Oklahoma's state government.

Similar to the way that Raj extolled the civic energy of the Indian-American community that impressed him as a young man, Cade pointed to the influences of his community-of-origin. While acknowledging the impact of his parents' approach to their public service careers, Cade talked about the way his home community's political history affected him. The area of southwest Oklahoma where Cade grew up was known as a seedbed for political leaders, including several prominent national and state political figures. As Cade put it, "I grew up in a world where politics was part of our daily lives, and I was always aware of that."

Beyond the influence of family or community members, some participants credited the influence of others who helped them shape their service ethic. Some, like Melanie and Lucia, talked about internship supervisors whose examples helped them understand the true nature and

the value of public service. Others, like Raegyn, talked about the impact of teachers and school administrators. For Tiffany B., whose public service journey started when she was in her 20s, public service was modeled through the community-based ministry of her pastors. Tiffany, a case manager for a state social service agency in Michigan, traveled a path to professional public service that was slightly more unconventional than the other participants. Tiffany's earliest service experiences were provided through the church she attended at a crucial point in her life. As was the case with Shay, Tiffany linked her public service ethic to her Christian faith and saw the two as inextricably connected. As Tiffany did her work (which she called her ministry), she was living out her faith, which was notably the strongest influence on her service ethic.

Before concluding this examination of the respondents' public service ethic, an important observation needs to be made. No matter their backgrounds or formational influences, these participants embraced and developed a service ethic for themselves. At no point did they speak of the qualities of service in ways that indicated that they were in public service to appease some authority figure in their lives or that their beliefs about service were somehow imposed on them. They did not form their deeply held beliefs about public service begrudgingly. As was true of the pro-social impact drive, the public service ethic by which these individuals lived their lives was personal and was a significant part of their overall worldview. Though it may have been informed through the influences of key individuals in their lives and was focused on the betterment of others, the participants demonstrated that their service ethic was their own. In my experience, this is a unique quality that is not often observed in the general population.

An Embedded Service Interest

The third dispositional motivator observed in the respondents' stories was their *embedded service interest*. This quality relates to the numerous references the participants made to their

self-directed attraction to service, which were reminiscent of the ways people are drawn to practices such as stamp collecting, working on cars, collecting sports memorabilia, or any myriad of pastimes. Granted, the service interests discussed in relation to their professionalization processes were by no means diversions. Nevertheless, the way the respondents spoke about their service interests often sounded like individuals describing their favorite hobbies. As was the case with the previous motivators, their embedded service interest was decidedly intrinsic and therefore, closely related to and intertwined with their service drives and ethics.

Though their service interests eventually led to public service careers, the participants' interests in service showed up in a couple of different ways that predated their professional plans. For some, their service interest was initially more academic than active, meaning their interests were sparked and fueled by their studies rather than specific service activities. We can see this in the stories of Raj and Sean, and to a large extent, it was a part of Michael's narrative as well. As was seen in Raj's account, it was the *concept* of public service demonstrated through his family and community and extolled by President Boren that captured his attention. Granted, his voluntary experiences in the doctor's office and at his local zoo had an impact on him as well. But as Raj stated himself, he found the *idea* of serving the common good inspiring. With Sean, his academic interest in international affairs was the engine that propelled his public service ambitions. The connection between his academic interests and his career ambitions was unmistakable. And even though Michael's upbringing was in many ways defined by active public service, his academic interests opened the door to his public service awakening and what appeared to be his inevitable entrance into the public sector.

The intersection of academics and service interest was apparent in the stories of others as well. The most common academic interest observed in the respondents' stories was politics. This

was seen previously in Cade's story. The highly charged political atmosphere of his hometown and surrounding area in southwest Oklahoma provided the first framework for Cade's consideration of public service. "Looking back on my childhood, it's like politics and public service was always part of the equation, it was just always there," Cade observed. Through his academic interest in politics, Cade began to lean toward public service in a professional sense. And it was through his political studies that Cade "became aware that there were lots of other ways to be involved in public service than through elected office only."

An academic interest in politics was also the gateway to public service for Jacob and Raegyn. In Jacob's case, his interest in politics traced back to middle school. "I started getting into, reading about, learning about, and getting really interested in politics like the presidential, or Senate and House elections, kind of on the federal level," Jacob recalled. "I got really interested in the policy behind [the elections], and just the elections in general. And this was when I was like 12 [to]16 years old. So in terms of government, that's when I started getting interested." Similarly, Raegyn credited her interest in politics for sparking her focus on public service. "As a kid, there was always that interest… I was just very tuned into what was going on in the world. Then I really latched onto it." Raegyn continued, "That interest was kind of confirmed and compounded in high school where I really loved my government and U.S. history classes. Those were by far my favorite subjects. That fascination and interest in government and politics and history just grew and grew."

As we saw in Shay's story, the interest in service for some was more active than academic. The more Shay engaged in service activity, the more she fell in love with service, which in turn influenced her academic pursuits. Though her story indicates that Shay was a good student, her love of service activity led the way and her studies followed behind accordingly. The

same dynamic was seen in Lucia's story. By her own admission, Lucia was an active learner who struggled academically whenever she did not see a practical application of her learning. Like Shay, Lucia's academic plans were largely influenced by her service ambitions that were rooted in practice. Another individual whose interest in service activity guided his academic (as well as career) planning was Wade M. The story of Wade's journey to become the field director for one of the members of Oklahoma's congressional delegation was extensive. Throughout his interview, Wade reinforced the practical nature of his service interests, beginning with his campaign to become Ecology Chair of his elementary school's student council. His practical leanings influenced several facets of his collegiate endeavors, including his choice to major in Public Affairs Administration at OU rather than the more theoretical tracks within political science. The academic fields that captured Wade's attention seemed to be propelled by his practical service experiences, which included four key internships: two summers in the offices of the Water Authority in his home state of Nevada (where he also received his first exposure to the state legislature), Wade's first summer of graduate school, when he interned in the D.C. office of the member of Congress for whom he now works, and a year-long internship in the Oklahoma governor's office during his final year of OU's MPA program. Like Shay, Lucia, and others, Wade's practical service interests and experiences seemed to fuel his hunger to learn more about the fields in which he worked as his future plans came into sharper focus.

Whether this first observation applies to other public servants or is restricted to the participants of this study, the affinity for service shared by our respondents is notable. As observed, these individuals were drawn to a life of public service because it appealed to them as persons. They further demonstrated that they would be undeterred in their pursuit of public service whether personally, professionally, or both. The foregoing considerations support the

conclusion that the public service journeys of these individuals sprang from their inner *being* and was more self-directed than the product of external forces and influences. The implications of such a conclusion could have a significant effect on the recruitment, encouragement, preparation, and placement of individuals like our participants within both arenas of public service education and public administration.

Observation Two: Service-based Reward Perspectives

The second observation about the participants' motivational characteristics is gleaned from the elements of the participants' narratives that pointed toward the praxis movements of *engagement* and *assessment*. The developmental process observed unfolded as follows: the participants' active service experiences were accompanied by their evaluations of the service opportunities they had experienced. The conclusions the participants drew from their experience assessments had three noticeable outcomes. First, their assessments clarified the respondents' self-perceptions. Second, their conclusions enhanced the participants' understanding of the nature of service. Third, their evaluations impacted the participants' service dispositions by confirming their service ambitions. The assessments of their service experiences, whether positive or negative, added fuel to their service motivational fires which, in turn, had significant influence on the participants' perceptions of their respective service futures. When applying the basic Praxis Lens to this process, we can see that their *doing* informed their *becoming*, paving the way for a new *being* out of which they would continue to gravitate toward service.

Within the assessment process, the most influential conclusions were the participants' perceptions of reward, which were nonmaterial in character. Consistently, as our participants reflected on their respective public service voyages both throughout their historic accounts as well as during their later reflections, it became clear that these individuals were not motivated

primarily by monetary or material gain. This idea was stated pointedly by Julie, the assistant city manager from a Kansas City suburb: “Most people I know who are in public service don’t do it for the paycheck.” Throughout their interviews, this conclusion was confirmed consistently as the participants revealed a reward structure that was centered on two main aspects: *service satisfaction* and *achievement gratification*. These reward aspects were most apparent as the respondents talked about their career service, including their current positions and responsibilities.

Before we examine these reward perspectives, attention should be given to the aforementioned criteria the participants used to evaluate the rewards of their work. As noted, the participants’ reward perspectives were informed by the dispositional motivators outlined above. These motivators, both separately and combined, provided a kind of rubric by which the respondents evaluated their personal and professional service experiences and helped create the determinative benchmarks the respondents used as they discussed their levels of service satisfaction and service achievement gratification.

Let us briefly consider the indicators of both types of reward that were identified in the respondents’ accounts.

The Reward of Service Satisfaction

When looking for indicators of a respondent’s sense of satisfaction, I paid close attention to key words like “enjoyed,” “liked,” “loved,” and other words that relayed a similar sentiment. The context of the respondents’ comments often determined the extent of their satisfaction or personal enjoyment. We can see these references at numerous points in the stories we have already considered. Returning to the account of Raj’s career sojourn, he spoke often about his enjoyment of several different experiences that he saw as instrumental in his professional

development. He “enjoyed” working in the doctor’s office as a teenager because it gave him a sense of purpose. Raj described his D. C. internship as “pretty interesting”, which in the context could be interpreted to mean that he saw the experience as significant and meaningful, especially in relation to his future career. He “liked” the culture surrounding the 2008 Democratic National Convention and the people who he worked alongside in large part because of their “passion.” Raj felt that his career choice was validated by his internship experience with the City of Norman, where he was given the freedom to pursue the projects that most interested him, and where he saw the positive effects of his work in the Norman community. During his interview with the agency where he would eventually work, Raj found the agency’s work “interesting.” Once again, the context of his comments supports the conclusion that Raj found their work important. In the final statement of Raj’s account above, he remarked plainly that he found government work “fulfilling” primarily because of the significance of his work and the difference he knew he was making throughout the state. Even when considering the private sector opportunities that he had been given, which included higher pay and increased benefits, Raj did not find the private sector appealing. As was noted previously, he was not convinced that his friends who worked in the private sector had the same level of satisfaction in their positions as Raj had in his.

Similar instances can be seen in Shay’s story. Like Raj, Shay talked about her childhood enjoyment of serving. Her statement about service choosing her could be the ultimate summary of the satisfaction reward, especially when she concluded, “It is just something that I love. I love giving back. I love giving my time to those who need it.” That love of service was evident throughout the remainder of her account, especially seen in her unrelenting determination to find the right public service career fit. And even though the context of Shay’s love of service referenced her early service memories, the statement itself was in the present tense. Her service

was as rewarding for her currently as it was when she was young. Perhaps as much as, if not more than, any other participant, the reward of service for Shay came from the service itself. This ties in a little more directly with the reward of accomplishment, but it was evident in her comments that Shay drew satisfaction simply from serving others and being, as Shay called it, a "blessing" to them.

The expressions of satisfaction and enjoyment provided by Michael and Sean were more targeted, focusing primarily on the later phases of their lives. Though it might be a stretch to suggest that Michael's "enjoyment" of his business administration classes pointed toward a sense of satisfaction, the experience was confirmation enough to influence Michael's decision to shift gears academically, which led to a turning point in his academic and career planning. There was little doubt about what Michael meant when he later stated, "I really enjoy working for [this city]." He found fulfillment working for a city whose government took service seriously and whose citizens were responsive to the service being provided. Perhaps Michael's most poignant remarks about personal satisfaction can be found in the closing segments of his account. Growing a community and improving the lives of its residents was where Michael got "the most pride and the most enjoyment out of" his work. Michael best summarized his level of public service satisfaction when he said, "I get to see people realizing the benefit of [our work] in their lives. That's the enjoyment!"

As we review Sean's account, a picture of a deeply satisfied and fulfilled public servant is not difficult to see. An aspect of Sean's story that was particularly poignant was the satisfaction he derived from knowing that his service was facilitating the work of others; that through his efforts, Sean was empowering others to complete their missions. In this way, Sean was a participant in the larger mission from which he gleaned substantial satisfaction. This level of

satisfaction carried over into his increased responsibilities where he found “being in the room” rewarding because it meant he could make a larger contribution to the mission effort. That same sense of satisfaction factored into Sean’s plans to pursue a senior leadership position where he could “affect more change” and “see the bigger impact” of his work.

In each of these cases, the respondents derived a sense of personal satisfaction primarily from the knowledge that they were making a difference in their respective environments; that their work was having a positive impact on their communities of focus. This same characteristic was observed in other accounts. Similar to Sean, both Lucia and Raegyn talked about the satisfaction they received from the service of facilitation. As a program director, Lucia not only enjoyed knowing that her service partners had what they needed to succeed in their work, she also talked about the sense of pride she felt whenever they would move on and thrive in other endeavors. For Raegyn, whose main responsibilities were "behind the scenes,” satisfaction came from serving “decision-makers” by making sure they had reliable information needed to make the best possible decisions and create policies that would be the most beneficial for their constituents specifically as well as the residents of the state.

Many of the participants found satisfaction in the knowledge that lives had been positively impacted through their efforts in immeasurable ways. They often relied on specific moments when something meaningful occurred through their service. While several participants offered examples of these meaningful encounters, perhaps the most vivid example was provided by Tiffany. During her years working in the foster care system of Michigan, Tiffany was presented with a difficult situation involving two teenage sisters, who were 15 and 16 years old respectively. Due to their mothers’ addiction issues, both girls had become wards of the state and were living in separate homes. One day, the girls contacted Tiffany with news about their

mother's health. Through Facebook, the girls had learned that their mother was hospitalized with a terminal illness. Because their mother had forfeited her parental rights, state policy stipulated that their mother was to have no contact with her girls, but they were determined to see her before she died. Looking back at that moment, Tiffany said, "I knew then that if I did not help give those girls the opportunity to see their mother, I could not have lived with myself." Knowing that the odds were against her and risking possible disciplinary action, Tiffany brought the dilemma to her supervisor. Thankfully, her supervisor was as compassionate as Tiffany and said, "Do what you think is in the best interest of those girls." Staying as close to agency policy as possible, Tiffany arranged separate meetings and accompanied the girls individually as they went to see their mother. Even though the girls struggled emotionally when they saw their mother's declining condition, Tiffany recounted the significance of the meetings and the gratitude the girls expressed that they were able to spend a few hours with their mother one last time. At the time of our interview, the young women had become adults, and Tiffany noted that she still received messages from the girls, thanking her for giving them that opportunity. Communicating the deep sense of satisfaction she garnered from that experience, Tiffany concluded her story by saying, "Sometimes you gotta do what you gotta do!" confirming her belief that people mattered more than policy.

The Reward of Achievement Gratification

Another type of reward the respondents referenced came from their work achievements. While this characteristic may be common among individuals who take pride in their work, the achievements that were gratifying to our respondents were specifically service-related. It could be argued, with good reason, that this reward is simply another dimension of the satisfaction reward. The validity of that assertion notwithstanding, the reward of achievement gratification

the participants identified came from the completion of their service work irrespective of public acknowledgement. In fact, in some cases the reward was most visible as the respondents talked about their accomplishments that were achieved in challenging conditions.

Examples of this type of gratification reward can be seen in some of the previous accounts. As one entrusted with public safety, Raj talked about the gratification he felt any time he knew that a safety threat had been thwarted due to his efforts. He also used the phrase "satisfaction in an unsatisfactory way" when discussing his ability to get agencies to work together in a crisis. Even though the circumstances were challenging and often tragic, Raj found his work in those conditions rewarding because of the positive potential outcomes. Likewise, in a portion of Michael's interview not included above, he talked about the importance of maintaining an accomplishment focus as a buttress against restlessness. Noting the temptation for public servants like himself to focus only on the present, Michael discussed the value of being content to work on projects that will pay off someday, even if the long-term effects of the work are not immediately evident to the public or those doing the work, for that matter.

Others spoke pointedly about the value of accomplishment gratification, especially in the face of difficulties. In that vein, Jacob talked about public servants holding onto the purpose of their work by asserting, "Public service is about working towards the improvement or, at least, the sustainment of someone's life." Jacob also noted that there are times when the immediate impact of that service is not seen by service workers, as well as the public. In those times, Jacob emphasized the importance of "knowing that you've done something to improve peoples' lives and the community that you work in," whether that knowledge "comes at the end of the day, the end of a week, or even at the end of the year."

As Julie reflected on the realities of public service, she talked about the problems that would arise and their sobering effect. The more she settled into her role as assistant city manager, the more she was disabused of the notion that "people are just going to be so appreciative" of the work she was doing. "Well, that's not how people are," Julie declared. "You don't hear from people when they're happy. You hear from people when they're upset about things." Despite the complaints she deals with and the "head scratchers" that would surface from time to time, Julie was sustained by the realization that her work was "meaningful," even if the feedback tempted her to think otherwise.

Through his early service experiences, Wade learned that there are times when the work itself has to be enough. Working as an intern with the Water Authority offices in Nevada, Wade recalled a project that involved the reconstruction of a water pipeline aimed at heading off a crisis that was 15 years away. The project alarmed the people in that part of Nevada. And though officials did their best to calm the concerns of the public, the project remained controversial. Despite significant opposition, the Water Authority completed the project because they knew it had to be done. That experience stayed with Wade and was reaffirmed repeatedly as he continued working in the public arena. For Wade, the challenges of public service demand that public servants draw gratification from implementing difficult decisions. "Public service is when you're put in a position where no matter what you choose, there will be positive responses and negative responses," Wade remarked. "And it's how you deal with it from there, which I think is what dictates if you're a successful or an unsuccessful public servant." Making it clear that one's motivation must be rooted in service accomplishments, Wade concluded, "Public service is about making those tough decisions and not putting what would be the most expedient or easy to deal with over what you know needs to happen."

To quantify the rewards our participants gained through executing their service responsibilities would be practically impossible. Yet, I assert that it would be as equally impossible to deny the effect of the personal satisfaction and gratification our participants expressed as they talked about the rewards of their labors. The tangible and intangible outcomes of their service were significant motivational forces in their lives. These reward experiences not only informed the participants' dispositional service inclinations, they also had transformative power as the participants continued crafting and recrafting their perspectives on who they were as public servants and the value of their work. As will be discussed in the next section, the participants did not disregard basic life concerns as they made their public service career decisions. They did, however, demonstrate repeatedly that their career choices were fueled by a sense of purpose and meaning that far exceeded a paycheck. This insight could prove invaluable for the educational and professional implications of public service preparation and incentivizing.

Observation Three: Service-oriented Need Fulfillment

In many ways, this final observation could be seen as an outgrowth or further evidence of the previous observations. I have chosen to give this aspect of the respondents' interviews special attention to emphasize the close relationship that I witnessed between the participants' personal growth and their service ambitions. For these individuals, public service was not an ancillary aspect of their personal development. It was, in my estimation, their primary pathway for becoming the best versions of themselves. In terms of the Praxis Lens, this observation is most visible in the *assessment* movement as the respondents' engaged in self-reflection, specifically in response to their service experiences. In an attempt to better explain the motivational dynamics I observed, I have applied Maslow's (1943) "hierarchy of needs"[60] as a

[60] As discussed in Chapter Two

framework for discussing the relationship between the respondents' aspirational impulses and their service inclinations. In short, I assert that much of the participants' development was driven by their efforts to fulfill their deep-seated needs, especially those needs that would be classified by Maslow as "higher" (p. 375) or "self-actualization needs" (pp. 382-383).

The primary focus on the need for self-actualization does not suggest that the participants disregarded other needs in their pursuit of a public service career. In terms of the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy, these individuals were fully aware of their need to receive compensation for their work. After all, they were in pursuit of a career, not volunteer opportunities. Even though the participants were not driven primarily by the prospect of monetary or material gain, realistic employment considerations were part of their decision-making calculus. Four of the respondents made specific references to the importance of compensation, including Sean who mentioned the prospect of a bigger paycheck as he contemplated securing senior leadership positions. Others, like Melanie and Robert, made calculated decisions during their professional journeys based on salary and benefits.

In addition to references made about financial matters, several of the participants discussed job security as a motivating factor. Individuals like Melanie and Wade discussed their decisions to select undergraduate degrees that would increase their employability. Others, like Lucia and Tiffany, talked about their decisions to accept service positions that were, in their opinions, less-than-ideal because of the security they offered. In that vein, the respondents also referenced the importance of skill development, which could be considered (and will be discussed below as) a self-actualization need. In a few instances, references to skill development were made in the context of the participants' concerns about remaining employed. As will be discussed, this was not the only context in which the respondents spoke about the importance of

enhancing one's professional skills. But it was a consistent consideration, further illustrating that the participants were focused on practical concerns, as well as abstract ideals. Despite their altruistic professional designs, the participants knew they needed to pay the bills and made professional decisions accordingly.

When considering the mid-range needs of Maslow's hierarchy, an argument could be made that many of the examples provided in the previous observation (regarding the participants' reward systems) were illustrative of their efforts to fulfill their psychological needs of belongingness, love, and esteem (McLeod 2007, p. 5). Without engaging in a level of psychoanalysis for which I am not qualified, I believe the link between service interest and a desire for love and belonging can be seen in each of the first four accounts that began this chapter. Other accounts considered previously, especially the narratives of Julie, Lucia, and Melanie, would contribute to this assessment. And, in a general sense, part of the satisfaction and gratification rewards explored above could be reflective of the participants' esteem needs. This was notable in Wade's narrative where, on numerous occasions, he talked about the impact of the positions he had secured throughout his journey, particularly with members of Congress and the governor, and the esteem that came with them.

By concentrating on the higher needs of self-actualization, we gain a window into the inner motivations of the participants. Concerns and criticisms of Maslow's hierarchy notwithstanding, I find the language of self-actualization to be particularly apropos for this analysis. As stated before, our participants demonstrated an abiding focus on achieving their full personal and professional potential through public service. The key to accomplishing their self-actualization goals was the process of self-discovery that received considerable attention throughout the interviews. When considering the interviews as a whole, three different aspects of

the self-discovery process were the most evident. Exercising some editorial license, I imagine the participants providing the following pieces of advice as a way of summarizing the lessons they had learned from their own self-discovery processes: 1) be self-aware; 2) keep growing; and 3) stay mission-focused.

Be Self-Aware

Consistently, the participants emphasized the importance of knowing oneself. This self-knowledge centered on three key aspects, which were viewed as fundamental for their own and others' public service success. First, the respondents emphasized the need for a *realistic inventory of skills and abilities*. Each of the respondents referred to the value of knowing their capabilities. For most of the participants, an assessment of skills was perhaps the most valuable benefit they gained from their service experiences. Some respondents, in particular Lucia, Raegyn, and Wade, recalled strategically selecting internship and practicum experiences that would provide opportunities to discover and/or develop specific professional skills. Others, like Michael and Sean, referenced the critical thinking and communication skills they used regularly in their current assignments, which they learned through their collegiate courses and programs.

Several of the respondents talked about the skills and abilities they developed through the rigors of their current assignments. For example, Shay discussed how she learned to be a better team member by working closely with others. On a more personal level, Jacob talked about the ways his responsibilities in city government helped him to realize that he was "more of a generalist" or someone who sees the bigger picture. No matter the means by which the participants gained a realistic perspective of their respective skills and abilities, each of them confirmed their belief that a skills and abilities inventory provided a solid foundation for their own development and increased the odds for public service success.

Second, the participants commonly pointed toward the significance of possessing a *clear assessment of service interests and preferences*. Once again, the respondents spoke about this issue in the context of experiential gleanings. In combination with a discovery of the things they were "good at doing," the participants underscored the ways their experiences helped them understand the types of professional service that most appealed to them. Examples of the respondents' references to their own clarifying experiences were varied. As we saw in Shay's story, the more she worked in the private sector, the more she realized that her service interests resided in the public service realm. Another illustration was provided by Melanie who, through her work with adults, discovered that she felt more at home concentrating on and interacting with young people, which was the primary focus of her current assignment. Lastly, because of the counseling aspect of her work, Tiffany discovered a renewed interest in teaching, especially at the collegiate level. When seen through the lens of self-actualization, it could be argued that the participants were convinced that any attempt at becoming the best they could be might be easily thwarted if public servants are not cognizant of their own service interests, which are crucial for working in positions where they would thrive.

The third aspect of self-awareness the participants identified as vital was a *reasonable conception of service values and convictions*. In many ways, this self-assessment aspect compliments the observation about the service ethic to which many of the participants alluded in their interviews. For some, awareness of this ethic and its impact on their decision-making processes needed to be more than operational; it needed to be known. This point was made explicitly by Michael in one portion of his interview not included above. For Michael, the clarity with which individuals understood their convictions was the key to principled public service. "You need to create your own personal set of ethics and codes," Michael emphasized. "You have

to be able to say, ‘Here’s what I will and will not do!’” The same kind of sentiment was expressed by Wade in the part of his interview referenced above where he discussed making difficult decisions. For Wade, possessing a clear and reasonable sense of one’s service values and convictions is vital for both maintaining focus in the midst of the professional grind and for weathering the storms of public service. To a large extent, the respondents’ focus on the value of developing and articulating their service values and convictions was evidence of their self-actualization. It is doubtful that these concerns would have been worthy of mention if they were not interested in becoming the best versions of themselves.

Before concluding this discussion about self-awareness, it is important to note that the respondents overwhelmingly applied these principles to the issue of *professional fit*. It could be argued the participants believed that knowing oneself was the key to finding the right place to serve and maximizing service effectiveness. Perhaps Michael articulated this idea the best when he spoke about the responsibility of public servants to make sure they are serving in ways that best suit them and their organizations. “I think it’s critical to be able to say, ‘I can’t serve this organization the best. It would be a disservice to the organization and to myself to stay,’” Michael stated. “If your city - your culture - doesn't fit you, then you need to step away. If you feel that you can't best do your job, then you need to acknowledge that you're not going to be helpful to your government, to your council, or to your citizens.” Without putting words in Michael’s mouth, I believe that he and other participants would further assert that having the courage to take such a definitive step would be challenging at best if one did not know oneself.

Keep Growing

One of the essential elements of the participants’ self-actualization process was their emphasis on cognition and intentionality, which points to the significance of self-reflection. As it

pertains to this second component of self-actualization, it may seem redundant to discuss *growing* as a part of *becoming*. But the concern raised by the respondents on this front is that a commitment to growth and personal development needs to be acknowledged and deliberately pursued. In their references to this issue, the participants did not seem to differentiate between professional development and personal growth. One area of self-improvement influenced the other. It is not surprising, then, that their references to growth had many faces.

Some of the respondents, such as Melanie and Raj, underscored the practical impact of continuous learning. At the time of the interview, Melanie had just earned her master's degree in social work and was discovering how to best apply the knowledge she gained to her current responsibilities. Additionally, Melanie was in the process of acquiring full licensure so that she could improve her job performance as well as expand her credentials. At one point late in his interview, Raj stated, "I've always been a big proponent of the idea that *more education is better* because it gives you understanding and more experience that you can use to better contribute to your public service role." And toward the end of his interview, Wade emphasized the importance of learning through the *practice* of public service, which included continuously honing his professional skills, learning how to operate in the real world with real challenges, and being adaptable in the midst of changing conditions. Similarly, Cade talked about the importance of staying open-minded and flexible, especially when it comes to methodology. "Sometimes we need new approaches," Cade noted, "At times we need to get beyond the usual practices and think of new ways to solve problems."

Overall, the respondents' comments about their development and self-improvement left me with the impression that, for them, being effective public servants required a growth mindset. Once again, this may be indicative of the kind of people these individuals were. In many ways,

they were exemplary civil servants for whom anything less than excellence was not an option. What stands out to me, however, is the impulse toward altruism that was woven into their self-actualization strategies. Their development was not just for themselves or even solely for the purpose of advancing their careers. They were sincerely interested in becoming the best public servants that they could be as they continued to intentionally grow as individuals.

Stay Mission-Focused

Dovetailing out of the previous comment, several participants identified the value of keeping the purpose of their work in the front of their minds. With few exceptions, their references to maintaining a mission focus were made in the context of situations when doing so was challenging. One example was offered by Tiffany. A couple times during her interview, Tiffany spoke about the discipline required to stay mission-driven, indicating that at times, her greatest adversary was herself. At one point in her journey, Tiffany struggled with the temptation to choose the comfort and familiarity of a position she held over the pursuit of her service passion, which she eventually followed by accepting a position in her current agency. Others, including Cade, Raegyn, and Raj, made mention of the power of remembering their purpose. Each of them pointed to the value of reminding oneself that, as Raj stated, "You're working for others. You're not working for yourself." For Wade, that same idea was fundamental for achieving longevity in public service. Acknowledging that public service brings with it both "plenty of wins and losses," Wade stressed that keeping one's service goals front and center allows individuals to "go through the valleys and then build yourself back up" because they know what is ultimately at stake.

It should also be noted that for some of the participants, their mission focus contains an element of "paying it forward" as they sought to emulate the support they received throughout

their journeys. Several respondents took time to talk about the support and encouragement of key people who helped them as they forged their public service careers. Some, like Melanie and Raegyn, talked about the support of college and university instructors who helped fuel their public service desires. Along these same lines, Julie discussed the profound impact she experienced through the investment of a female professor who not only saw Julie's potential, but also made it her mission to encourage other women to enter public service. Referring to the "good ole boys network" that she had encountered for herself, Julie recalled her professor's influence. "That has had an impact on how I view public service and why I think I spend a lot of time mentoring women," Julie remarked, "I think more women need to be in local government and in these roles, and I want to help make that happen."

For individuals like Sean, Robert, and Tiffany, crucial encouragement came from supervisors and mentors. For others, like Wade and Cade, some of their greatest encouragement came from co-workers and colleagues. On that front, Wade referenced the impact of the response he received from the governor's staff when he made the move from the governor's office to the field office of the member of Congress where he was currently serving. "That was a really hard decision," Wade recalled, "I felt like I was letting them down. They believed in me and gave me a shot."[61] But instead of being met with criticism and recriminations, Wade said that the staff "couldn't have been nicer." As we sat talking several years later, I could see how meaningful the experience was for Wade as he recalled the staff's response. "They were all spectacular, including the governor. They totally got it and told me, 'You're gonna do great things!'" There

[61] For background purposes, the story of Wade's employment by the Oklahoma governor's office was further evidence of the nonmaterial ambitions of many respondents. After finishing his year-long internship with the governor's office, Wade "just kept showing up", believing that his volunteer efforts would eventually lead to a paid position, which they did.

was little room for doubt in my mind that Wade, who demonstrated the ability to recognize excellence in others, has taken the opportunity to provide similar encouragement to others.

When considering the significance the respondents placed on maintaining a mission focus, I am struck by their realism. They each had been in public service long enough to understand that the more abstract dimensions of a public service ambition must be constantly re-evaluated in light of their ongoing service experiences. As many of them pointed out, distraction and discouragement are ever-present threats to effective and rewarding public service. That thought, perhaps more than any others, may explain their vigilance in remembering their purpose and encouraging others to do the same. And that vigilance, for me, is further evidence that these individuals were committed to reaching their full potential both as individuals and as those who have made a career out of serving the common good.

When examining the service motives of our respondents, the role of need fulfillment deserves consideration. Whether their intentions were practical, professional, personal, or some combination of the three, the participants provided testimony that several legs of their professional journeys were taken so that specific needs could be met. As we seek to understand their reasons for selecting, preparing for, and entering careers in public service, we gain important insights by analyzing their narratives through the need fulfillment lens, particularly the need for self-actualization. Emerging from the analysis of the respondents' references to their self-actualization is the picture of a kind of marriage between the participants' deepest needs and their service inclinations, indicating that their service motives are tied, at least in part, to their own sense of identity. Stated plainly, public service was not merely an occupation for our participants. It was a significant element of their self-perceptions. Assuming this conclusion has validity, we may be faced with the realization that their public service personas were somewhat

paradoxical. They were public servants because they served, and they served because they were public servants. In my opinion, any attempt to separate these two aspects would not only be futile, it would also rob us of one of the most important findings of this study: that their *being* and their *doing* were inseparable.

Public Service and the Academy

Running alongside the primary research focus of this study are the educational interests and applications of the findings. With that in mind, I asked the participants to provide their insights into the kinds of educational initiatives they believed were needed if college or university students were to be successful in a public service career. To each participant I posed a hypothetical scenario set in a higher education context. I asked the participants to imagine that they were members of an advisory committee at an institution of higher education that was creating a public service education program aimed at preparing undergraduate students for careers in the public sector. "As a member of this team," I asked, "what are the three elements of a public service program that you think would be most essential - the kinds of things you would fight for?" The participants' responses provided a wealth of applicable information.

Many of the participants' recommendations were reflective of their own collegiate education in terms of both instruction they did or did not receive. While a handful of respondents included references to their master's programs, they focused primarily on the context of the question, namely baccalaureate-level instruction. Though their responses varied, the respondents concentrated on similar areas of concern. In a couple of cases, the recommendations were either universal or almost so. As a whole, the respondents' feedback fit into three different types of learning experiences: 1) skills-based learning, 2) knowledge-based learning, and 3) practice-

based learning[62]. Additionally, several respondents recommended specific institutional and/or programmatic structures and practices designed to augment and support the hypothetical learning experiences.

Skills-based Learning

Though they varied both in number and in character, most of the respondents stressed the importance of learning particular skills that they found to be invaluable in their current positions. The participants spoke generally about the programmatic inclusion of the skills emphasized rather than connecting them to specific courses or activities. The two skill areas that received the most attention were related to *professionalism* and *interpersonal interactions*. In both of these areas, the recommended skill learning reflected many of the values discussed previously in this chapter. For example, several of the respondents pointed to the need for self-awareness, particularly as it pertained to interacting with colleagues and other associates. They emphasized seeing oneself as a part of a team instead of operating as a solo actor and learning how to actively listen to, constructively interact with, and incorporate disparate ideas and opinions. Branching out of the need for self-awareness, a couple of the respondents pointed toward the need to know how to conduct oneself in the professional environment, which included enhancing emotional intelligence that enables an individual to read the reactions of others.

Other skills emphasized were more practical in nature. Several respondents discussed the need for critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which they believed needed to be learned as early in the educational process as possible. At least three of the respondents spoke specifically about the need to know how to communicate well *in writing*. Whether they were referencing

[62] Organized according to the number of times each type of learning was referenced by the respondents.

reports, press releases, or case notes, these individuals underscored the point that poor writing is not only operationally problematic but could pose a threat to one's professional future.

The final skill set that received attention was harder for the respondents to define but occupied a high place of importance. These skills may be best described as *attitudinal*. Chief among these attitudinal skill recommendations was the value of developing *grit*, which the participants articulated using terms like "stick-to-it-iveness", "being thick skinned", and "keeping your eye on the ball." In league with *grit*, the respondents also discussed the significance of cultivating the ability to stay mission focused. The respondents also recommended that students be given instruction on how to remain life-long learners, deal with *secondary trauma*, and maintain realistic expectations about one's societal impact.

Knowledge-based Learning[63]

In addition to the skill knowledge the participants recommended for our hypothetical program, specific areas of academic concentration were identified. Unlike the previous list, the respondents' knowledge-based recommendations were linked to specific types of courses and their curriculum. The fields that were mentioned the most were related to *government basics*: institutions, structures, powers granted/exercised, and policymaking, *political philosophy and theory*, and *political ethics*. In addition to the more fundamental courses, a few of the respondents asserted that anyone in an undergraduate public service program should be exposed to *research methods* and *public administration basics*. These same individuals acknowledged that a necessary "deeper dive" into these areas would take place in most public administration master's programs, but they felt that an undergraduate public service program should introduce

[63] I am aware that the term *knowledge* can be problematic, especially in an educational context. However, suitable alternatives were difficult to identify. *Cognition* is too closely aligned with the process of knowing or learning, and *informational* seemed too narrow, technical, or atomistic. I chose *knowledge* to indicate the wide range of data, processes, and experiences that contribute to individual cognition.

students to these fields. Another recommendation from a handful of respondents pertained to the value of a *liberal arts* curriculum. Though institutional constraints may preclude such an emphasis, these participants believed that cross-disciplinary learning would be as crucial for students in undergraduate public service programs as it was for them. Since many of these respondents had responsibilities that required some level of familiarity with several different public service arenas, their encounters with other academic fields were seen as essential.

One final recommendation that was more academic in nature was aimed at pedagogy. Two of the respondents underscored the impact of instruction that was highly applicable to real-time situations. Others alluded to this pedagogical practice without mentioning it specifically. In total, however, I came away with the strong impression that most of the participants believed that college and university instructors who help students reify abstract concepts and theories and apply them to "real world" scenarios are indispensable.

Practice-based Learning

Throughout their interviews, each one of the respondents pointed, in one way or another, to the educational and preparatory need for practical experience within the world of public service. In most cases, spending significant time in the public service space was at the top of the respondents' list of recommendations. Though many discussed gaining hands-on experience through standard programs like service projects, practicums, and internships, they also emphasized the need for creativity and simply "getting out there" particularly as volunteers. The participants also stressed the value of participation in multiple public service endeavors, especially internships, which some contended should be nonnegotiable program requirements.

Another aspect of the participants' practice-based recommendations concerned the need for professional guidance through *mentorships* and *connections with service professionals*. While

most of the respondents who made the mentorship recommendation referenced instructor-student relationships (one respondent even talked about peer-to-peer mentorships), some acknowledged that, if possible, mentorships with public service professionals could be invaluable. But in most cases, references to public service professionals tended to be more academically formal, suggesting that public servants be invited to speak to and interact with students within the classroom setting.

Institutional/Program Structures and Practices

Beyond their concerns about learning experiences, a few of the respondents listed elements that would be associated with either the institution, the program itself, or both. In some cases, the recommendations encompassed some of the learning outcomes discussed above. Two examples of these programmatic elements were *study abroad programs* and *involvement in campus organizations* (e.g., clubs and student government). Another recommendation that seemed important to nearly half of the respondents pertained to the school's or the program's approach to course electives. Simply put, these participants believed that undergraduate students who are entertaining careers in public service should be given the flexibility to try different courses in different areas *for credit* so that they can more accurately identify their areas of public service interest. This recommendation was supported by the narratives of many participants who talked about the benefit of their own academic explorations.

The final institutional/programmatic recommendation encompassed the participants' concerns about helping students navigate their way out of college and into the realm of professional public service. One respondent illustrated this recommendation by discussing the disappointing experience he had with his alma mater. After seeking guidance for his post-graduation plans, he was "shocked" that the school was not more organized on the career

guidance front. “I think schools do a really poor job in this,” the participant remarked. “Here you have people - sharp people - who want to serve in the public sector. How do they get started? Did they have a connection with a state agency or a county office or some other [connection]? I just felt like [my school] really dropped the ball there.” A handful of other respondents echoed similar concerns and suggested that any public service program should be set up so that students can transition into their careers with greater ease and minimal stress. This would not only include career guidance and resourcing but also professional coaching and networking that could make a big difference for some potential public servants.

As stated, the instructional recommendations of the respondents were substantive. Their instructive value to public service educational designs will be discussed in the next chapter. It bears noting, however, that their responses to the hypothetical scenario were not secondary to nor an ancillary segment of this study. Mining their educational advice provided insights into their own public service motivations that informed and were woven into the observations outlined in the previous sections of this chapter. All of the respondents offered their instructional recommendations thoughtfully and seriously. Whether they were cognizant of the possible curricular and/or programmatic ramifications of their recommendations or not, they spoke to me as though they were actually in the fictional room and the educational experiences of future public service students were at stake. If nothing else, their approach to the program question further confirms the conclusion that these are quality individuals and excellent public servants under whose tutelage anyone would be fortunate to sit.

One Final Look

As a qualitative study, the preceding discussion and analysis have not been concerned with the generalization of the findings. Though the findings are conversant with existing

research, I did not set out to prove or disprove specific findings, per se, nor did I intend to assert new theories about the character of public servants. I simply wanted to explore the terrain of the participants' public service inclinations and interests to better understand the motivational forces that led them into professional public service and gain clearer insights about the kinds of people who choose, prepare for, and enter public service careers. I believe these goals have been met.

When viewed through the Praxis Lens, we have seen that the individuals interviewed for this study were drawn to and pursued careers in public service out of deep abiding desire to realize their public service aspirations. At several points in their journeys, the service experiences in which they were engaged and their assessments of those experiences and of themselves confirmed that the public service toward which they had gravitated and were continually gravitating was the best path for them to take as persons and as professionals. Whether these individuals are indicative of public servants in general or are a specialized group is a matter for further consideration. Nevertheless, the narratives of these individuals have demonstrated the kinds of dynamics and processes that are foundational to the praxis concept, providing us with valuable insights into the reasons young people choose public service careers; insights on which we hope to build so their tribe will increase.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Before concluding this exploration of my research, a review of the research is in order. The following discussion will take another look at and summarize our key findings particularly in response to the study's primary research aims and questions. Consideration will also be given to the contribution of the research to the fields of Public Service Motivation and public service education. Additionally, I will offer recommendations for applying the research to undergraduate public service education programs. The discussion will conclude with an analysis of the study's limitations and opportunities for future research.

A Summary of the Findings

Growing out of the larger concern for the general status of civic engagement in the U.S., this study focused its attention on professional public service as a form of civic engagement and sought to understand the motivational factors that led recent college graduates into careers in public service. While examining the phenomenon of public service career decision-making, the study was also interested in exploring the impact of collegiate education and educational experiences on the public service ambitions of the participants.

Through structured interviews involving open-ended questions, the respondents recounted the stories of their journeys into the public service arena. In the analysis of their narratives, a portrait of these public service professionals emerged providing insights into the complex of motivational factors that resulted in the realization of their public service ambitions. To make sense of the evolutionary dynamics of their development as public servants, a praxis paradigm was applied to the participants' accounts whereby a similar pattern of *being*, *doing*, and *reflecting/becoming* was observed. Each of these aspects was described in terms of cyclical movements during which the respondents *gravitated* toward public service, *engaged* in voluntary

and professional service activities, and *assessed* their experiences and themselves in light of the previous movements, which yielded newer self-awareness and a sense of identity that fueled their desires to continue in the direction of public service careers.

Within these general praxis movements, four key observations were made that spoke to the primary research question of this study: *Why do recent college and university graduates choose careers in public service*? First, we have seen that the individuals in this study were intensely motivated by an internal drive to provide service whether as members of their communities or as career public servants. Our participants sought careers in public service out of deep and normative service commitments, fueled by an unwavering determination to make a positive impact on their worlds.

Second, even though the respondents sought affirmations that were external, their returns on investment were overwhelmingly nonmaterial. As they spoke about the benefits they gained from their service, both personally and professionally, very little attention was given to extrinsic motivations. Rather, these individuals found their rewards in the activity of their service, assured in the knowledge that they had achieved their goals, at least in part, of actively contributing to a better society.

Third, our participants located their respective paths to self-fulfillment through their service activities. Given a different topical context, there is little doubt that the respondents would have referenced other non-service-related activities as sources of need-fulfillment. Nevertheless, these individuals gave the strong impression that their broader self-actualization aspirations were inexorably tied to their identities and roles as public servants.

The fourth observation is not specific to the Praxis Lens used to interpret the findings but is relevant to the broader educational aims of this study. In looking at the role their collegiate

experiences played in their journeys, we have seen that our respondents pursued and engaged in educational preparation that was reflective of their intrinsic service ambitions. Even those who described their collegiate experiences in more exploratory terms confirmed the belief that their academic preparation was key for guiding them toward the type of service they desired and equipping them to be successful in their public service careers.

The Contribution of the Research

As noted in the opening chapter, the findings of this study were most related to two major fields of study: 1) Public Service Motivation (PSM); and 2) civic and political/public service higher education. In some ways, the findings of this study confirmed the scholarship in both arenas. In other ways, our research data provided added insights that contribute to a fuller understanding within each discipline.

Public Service Motivation

Given the focus of PSM scholarship on "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368), there should be little doubt that the participants of this study are perfect candidates for PSM research. Many of the characteristics of PSM that have received considerable attention over the past 30 years can be seen in our respondents. Of the four key areas included in the measurement scale offered by Perry (1996), most, if not all, of the respondents would almost certainly score high in the areas of public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice, with several of the respondents demonstrating an affinity for public policymaking (pp. 20-21). When applying the four-dimensional PSM measurement scale proffered by Brewer, et al. (2000), a case could be made for including our participants in the categories of Communitarians - those who are "motivated and stirred by sentiments of civic duty and public service" and demonstrate a strong

connection to the citizens they serve (p. 259); and Patriots - public servants who "act for causes much bigger than themselves, protecting, advocating, and working for the good of the public" (pp. 259-260). Additionally, some of the respondents could be considered Samaritans - "guardians of the underprivileged" and empathizers with those in distress (pp. 258-259), and Humanitarians - who fight for fairness and social justice (p. 260).

The findings of this study also provide support for the assertion of some PSM researchers (Bozeman, 2007; Horton, 2008; O'Toole, 2006, Rayner, et al., 2011) that public servants manifest strong commitments to ethical attitudes and behaviors that are rooted in intrinsic values aimed at the public interest. Even PSM scholars who were cautious about articulating a strong relationship between public service ethics and the public interest (Perry & Wise, 1990; Brewer & Selden, 1998; Gabris & Simo, 1995; Wittmer, 1991) could find indications of such a relationship in the data gleaned from this study. When considering the work of numerous PSM researchers who have theorized about and worked to uncover evidence of operational public service ethics within public servants, compared to their private sector counterparts (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Brewer, et al., 2000; Caillier, 2015; Choi, 2004; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2006; Perry, 1996; 2000; Stazyk & Davis, 2015; Wittmer, 1991; Wright, et al., 2016), the narratives of this study's participants offer confirmation of their claims. Finally, those scholars who have applied a more critical, if not rigorous, analysis of the public service ethic (Christensen & Wright, 2018; Esteve, et al., 2015; Ripoll, 2019; Schott & Ritz, 2018) might find their skepticism challenged in the face of the multi-dimensional character of our respondents' approaches to the question of the public service ethic. For our participants, a public service ethic was not only normative for themselves but also for their profession.

As a part of the broader conversation about the public service ethic, scholars who have

explored the *antecedents* of PSM, especially pertaining to the development of ethical beliefs, might gain greater insights and, in some cases, may find their theoretical assumptions challenged through the findings of this study. The assertion of some PSM researchers (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Choi, 2004; Maesschalck, et al., 2008; Perry, 2000; Perry & Vandenabeele, 2008; Perry & Wise, 1990; Ripoll, 2019; Stazyk & Davis, 2015; Wright, et al., 2016) that the formation of a public service ethic is the result of interactions between the internal pro-social impulses of individuals and the institutions (like family, community, and education) and organizations of which they are a part may find a degree of validation in this study. However, our findings suggest that the crucial step in this process, namely, that individuals with high PSM have at points in their development internalized pro-social values and translated them into an ethical code of conduct might not be as clear. While there can be little doubt that the respondents' narratives provide evidence of an internalization of external influences at different levels, the degree to which these influences helped forge a public service ethic is not fully supported by the findings. When examining the ethical codes referenced by the respondents, the data indicate that their ethical convictions were more self-generated than externally formed. A possible resolution for this disparity of findings could be the assertion that the external influences surrounding the respondents validated their ethical convictions, instead of shaping them. Despite these seeming contradictions, the contention that a deeply held public service ethic motivates public servants to abide by, reinforce, and perpetuate their pro-social values within the institutions and organizations to which they belong is supported by this study.

The findings also provide data that are germane to the area of PSM scholarship focused on the implications of the PSM concept within the realm of public administration. One such collection of studies looked at the relationships between public service workers and the

organizations who employ them. Our findings offer support for the conclusions of researchers who have found positive relationships between individual PSM and job satisfaction, individual performance, organizational commitment, and organizational effectiveness (Brewer & Selden, 2000; Crewson, 1997; Kim, 2005; Moynihan & Pandey, 2010; Naff & Crum, 1999; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Ritz et al., 2021). In my opinion, there is little room to question whether the participants in this study qualify as individuals with high levels of personal PSM that influences the enjoyment they receive from their work, their commitment to excellence, and their dedication to the mission of the organization and agencies who employ them.

Similarly, the narratives of our participants affirm some of the research that has explored the value of PSM for the recruitment and incentivization of public service employees. For example, the public service journeys of our respondents, particularly their collective determination to pursue public service careers, lends credence to the seminal hypothesis of Perry and Wise (1990) that "the greater an individual's public service motivation, the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization" (p. 370). Those PSM researchers who have tested this hypothesis (Besley & Ghatak, 2005; Bright, 2013; 2021; Christensen & Wright, 2011; Clerkin & Coggburn, 2012; Dur & Zoutenbier, 2014; Gould-Williams, et al., 2015; Leisink & Steijn, 2008; Ritz & Waldner, 2011; Wright & Pandey, 2008) can find support for their conclusions in our research. Our respondents' narratives fit the profile crafted by these studies depicting individuals with high PSM choosing and becoming established in long-term public service careers in environments where their public service ambitions were fostered by the organizational culture and the positive impact of their professional responsibilities. Given the degree to which our respondents were undeterred in realizing their professional public service ambitions and their relatively high levels of job satisfaction, the observations of these studies

would seem to be accurate.

Our research further validates the findings of other PSM studies that explored public servant reward preferences. These studies found evidence to support another assertion of Perry and Wise (1990) that public servants with high PSM place greater importance on intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards (Andersen, et al., 2012; Bright, 2009; Clerkin & Coggburn, 2012; Crewson, 1995; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998; Rainey, 1982; Wittmer, 1991). This conclusion was reflected in our respondents' public service narratives that consistently indicated that their enjoyment and satisfaction was not based on external material rewards. Rather, the rewards they valued most came from the work they were doing and the impact they believed they were having as they served their respective communities. This is not to say that the respondents placed no importance on external indicators of success or prestige. The findings indicate that our participants were receptive to and appreciative of positive public feedback and other acclamations. However, these types of external affirmations played a supplemental role in the reward systems of the respondents, especially the service-based rewards that were the most prized by the respondents.

Regarding research that has examined education as either a predictor of civic engagement or an antecedent of PSM development, the results of this study may raise more questions than answers. First, research that has explored the relationship between higher education and levels of civic engagement and found evidence of greater civic and political participation among college-educated individuals (Galston, 2007; Hillygus, 2005; Kam & Palmer, 2008; Lott, et al., 2013; Nie & Hillygus, 2001; Verba, et. al, 2003), might not find support for their conclusions in this study. While our respondents were college educated and clearly engaged in civic activities, the impact of the former on the latter is unclear. An argument could be made that the individuals in

our study would have been plugged into civil society whether they attended college or not, given their affinity for public service. While it is possible that our participants' level of involvement, especially through professional means, was intensified through their collegiate experiences, any claim that the findings of this study support the college-civic engagement relationship would be suspect.

Similarly, PSM researchers who identify a positive relationship between individual PSM development and higher education (Adams, 2000; Bright, 2005; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007a; Pandey & Stazyk, 2008; Perry, 1997; Vandenabeele, 2011) might draw mixed conclusions from our study. Once again, our findings indicate that individual PSM was high in our respondents before they entered college, even in the cases where professional public service came into focus at later stages of the collegiate experience. Granted, it would be difficult to deny that the levels of individual PSM in our study's participants were bolstered, if not increased, during their undergraduate studies, especially when gaining clarity of career direction. From that standpoint, we could conclude that the findings of the PSM studies listed above are valid. Questions remain, however, about the degree to which the collegiate experience facilitated substantive PSM formation.

Higher Public Service Education Research

The analysis of this study's findings in relation to the field of higher public service education was limited to two primary areas of concern: 1) the relationship between higher public service education and public service career choices; and 2) recommendations for effective teaching and learning within undergraduate public service education programs. Our study offers insights that apply to both areas of focus.

Higher Public Service Education and Public Service Career Decisions

The literature [reviewed] for the purpose of understanding the connection between college-level education and public service career choices was focused first on the broader impact of undergraduate curriculum. In question were the specific undergraduate courses that seemed to correlate with higher levels of civic engagement, PSM development, or both.

As discussed in Chapter One, some civic engagement education studies observed higher levels of civic engagement among college graduates who had focused on the social sciences or had courses that required high levels of critical thinking and analysis (Nie & Hillygus, 2001; Galston, 2007; Hillygus, 2005). The research of Vandenabeele (2011) into the connections between undergraduate curriculum and higher PSM levels found similar results, noting that the participants with higher PSM levels had completed coursework in the fields of social science, health care, and language education. Perhaps not surprisingly, other PSM scholars found that personal levels of PSM were higher among those whose undergraduate coursework included classes that were centered in public service values (Houston, 2000; Pandey & Stazyk, 2008).

In addressing this research, the findings of this study may offer limited insights since the respondents offered only sporadic references to their own undergraduate courses of study. However, inferences about specific courses can be drawn from the degree programs they pursued that would support the findings of the researchers discussed above. Without investigating the specific course requirements of our respondents' respective degree programs, it is safe to assume that most, if not all, of our respondents completed coursework in the field of social science, especially the political science majors. Given that most of their majors were in fields that incorporated problem-based learning at some level, it is also safe to conclude that our respondents were required to engage in critical thinking and data analysis at some point. The one curricular area mentioned previously that remains unclear is public service values instruction.

Again, inferences can be made, but in this case, any conclusions would be conjecture. Nevertheless, the research explored in the previous section would receive qualified confirmation from the results of our study.

Concerns raised by a handful of PSM scholars about the degree to which higher levels of PSM observed in undergraduates can predict public service career choices (Bright & Graham, 2015; Christensen & Wright, 2011; Henderson & Chetkovich, 2014; Tschirhart et al., 2008; Wright & Pandey, 2008, 2011) may be allayed somewhat through our findings. While the results of our study are in no way normative, evidence from our findings suggests that college students with high PSM, as was observed in our respondents, are highly likely to select and pursue public service careers, even if these career paths are not initially considered. Given the appropriate level of guidance and encouragement, undergraduates like our respondents may discover easily that public service careers are their best professional option.

One final area of research briefly considered earlier explored the influence of programmatic and non-classroom related collegiate experiences on levels of civic activism and public service inclinations among college students (Galston, 2007; Kim, 2021; Misa, et al., 2005). These studies found that student involvement in extra-curricular or co-curricular organizations and events pointed to elevated levels of pro-social awareness and behavior. Though our findings do not offer definitive support for the conclusions of these scholars, the level of involvement in service projects and service organizations to which our respondents gave witness would indicate that the results of these studies are valid.

Public Service Teaching and Learning

As noted in the previous chapter, the participants of this study were asked to offer educational recommendations for undergraduate public service courses and programs. Their

suggestions provide the substance for the following discussion. Like the higher public service education literature surveyed previously, the following review of this study's findings will be organized into the categories of *course content* and *teaching methods and program designs*. The respondents' recommendations will be applied to each area.

Course Content

Reflective of recent scholarship on public service education, the respondents recommended course content focused on three types of learning: 1) skills-based, 2) academics-based, and 3) practice-based. Their specific curricular recommendations bore a strong resemblance to the recommendations of the Wahlke Report (Wahlke, 1991) and recent public service scholars. Like Wahlke, the respondents saw the value of curriculum aimed at increasing the skill proficiency of undergraduates preparing for careers in public service particularly in the areas of basic statistics, research theory and analysis, research methods, and political writing (Wahlke, 1991, p. 57).

Other skills-based recommendations of the respondents were in line with the designations of soft skills - identified as "character traits, behaviors and attitudes associated with good employees [in addition to] personal attributes such as being well-organized, self-motivated, dependable, and likeable" (Kinsella & Waite, 2021, p. 338) and hard skills - defined as "teachable and measurable abilities, such as technical know-how and substantive knowledge of the field" (p. 338).[64] Though the list was limited, the respondents recommended the development of specific hard skills such as working well in teams, active listening skills, constructive interactions, and incorporating disparate ideas from colleagues. Most of the skills recommended by the participants were soft skills that centered, primarily, on self-improvement. For many, the

[64] The designations of "soft" and "hard" skills were gleaned from Harvey, 2000; Kinsella and Waite, 2021; and Robles, 2012.

key to personal growth was self-awareness, particularly pertaining to interpersonal relationships, developing emotional intelligence, and professionalism. One of the soft skills that was mentioned frequently by the respondents was the need to develop attitudes that promote longevity, such as staying mission focused, embracing the value of life-long learning, and discovering how to accept criticism.

Through their specific academics-based recommendations, our public service practitioners pointed toward many of the same curricular concerns raised by the scholars whose research was surveyed earlier. Many of the course recommendations aligned with traditional political science program designs and mirrored some of the recent scholarship in the field of political education.[65] The main courses suggested by the respondents were basic government structures and institutions (Wahlke, 1991), political philosophy (Ongaro, 2019), the study of political cultures and behavior (Fuertes, 2021), government theory, and political ethics (Schultz, 2016). In keeping with Wahlke (1991), the respondents also asserted the importance of a liberal arts emphasis in undergraduate political education that includes cross-disciplinary studies.

Like many of the researchers previously explored, our respondents also placed a premium on practice-based learning. As was observed, gaining hands-on experience within public service space was the first recommendation of many of the respondents. Similar to several of the studies surveyed (Collins, et al., 2012; Merritt & Kelley, 2012; Molina & McKeown, 2012), the respondents believed that different forms of practicums and internships were preferable to short-term service experiences. That said, they did not diminish the importance of volunteer service as a means of acclimating to the world of public service. Also, reflective of Bright and Graham (2015), the respondents emphasized the importance of mentorships and student connections with

[65] The studies referenced in Chapter One with which the respondents' recommendations aligned are cited after the corresponding course suggestion.

service professionals in introducing future public servants to the public realm.

Teaching Methods and Programmatic Designs

Like much of the research surveyed in Chapter One, most of the educational recommendations of the participants were not instructor-specific when addressing matters of instruction and program design. Instead, they focused more on broader educational strategies and approaches. An exception to this pattern was offered by a few respondents who made a point to emphasize the importance of college and university instructors intentionally applying abstract concepts and theories to real-world situations. For these respondents, applicable instruction was vital, and is reflective of the kind of *active learning* advocated by Careaga and Sanabria (2021).

The respondents also identified other instructional strategies, some of which received little to no attention from the public service education scholars. For example, some of the respondents promoted the educational value of study abroad programs, especially in light of expanding globalization. One area where the respondents' recommendations echoed educational scholarship (Galston, 2007; Kim, 2021; Misa, et al., 2005) was in the arena of extra- and co-curricular involvement in campus organizations, particularly those with a civic focus. Those respondents who suggested these kinds of connections saw them as an excellent way of practicing the cooperative aspects of public service.

Interestingly, none of the respondents mentioned *service learning* as a recommended instructional strategy. Granted, an argument could be made that the respondents' references to service projects and other types of practical learning experiences may have, by default, included their service learning encounters. However, it bears noting that, while they did not speak negatively about this instructional approach, they did not go out of their way to include it in their educational recommendations.

In terms of programmatic designs, it seemed clear to me that the respondents were in step with those scholars who call for more career-based public service education (Collins, et al., 2012; Jennings, 2019; Lewis, 2017; McClellan, 2021; Rogers, 2021; Rubaii, 2016; Smith & McConaughey, 2021). This observation is drawn more from the way the respondents framed their other recommendations rather than explicit references. As the respondents spoke about their recommendations, I heard a common theme based on their concerns that undergraduate public service education programs need to prepare future public servants for effective, difference-making service. Growing out of their concern for public service preparation, a few respondents emphasized the importance of helping graduates transition into public sector employment through career advising and resourcing, professional coaching, and networking within the public service field.

Recommendations for Research Application

Depending on the arena from which one approaches the findings of our research, there are several ways this study could be beneficial. In truth, individuals who operate in the public service field, whether they are a part of governmental or non-profit organizations, could use our study in a variety of ways. For example, organizational and agency recruiters, looking to fill key positions with recent college graduates, could structure their interviews to explore the different dimensions of the Praxis Lens. Leaders within these same types of organizations could devise incentivization systems to encourage continual employee development in line with praxis movements. Furthermore, strategies for increased organizational effectiveness could be created that incorporate the motivational dynamics observed through the Praxis Lens by removing institutional roadblocks to personal service ambitions and empowering public servants to maximize their service interests.

As someone who operates in the academic world,[66] my interest is in applying the findings of this study to higher public service education, particularly at the undergraduate level. While I believe my research can apply to established programs, such as political science and other types of political studies programs, my interest lies with the creation of an undergraduate public service program that supplements or perhaps is embedded within existing programs. The following recommendations are aimed at that objective. Though I am focused on programming that is not mainstream to standard disciplinary programs, it is my conviction that some of the elements explored below could easily be incorporated into traditional degree programs. However, I am aware of the challenges and institutional roadblocks that faculty and administration face when attempting to redesign existing programs. Accordingly, discussing the creation of a new type of program might be a more efficient use of time.

The Shape of the Public Service Program

The program I envision would be designed to come alongside existing degree programs as a way of focusing on the particular dynamics of public service careers and professions. As noted, the creation of such a program would sidestep some of the institutional challenges inherent in any attempt to redesign existing degree programs. However, the main motivation for creating a supplemental program would be to offer a value-added component to collegiate professional public service preparation. In other words, the program I propose would be a companion to degree programs that are focused on public service (e.g., political science, public justice, law enforcement, nonprofit management, public health, and public education), would offer an educational experience that is public service intensive, and would provide some form of credentialing that might boost professional opportunities (i.e., it would look good on a resumé or

[66] And, frankly, since this dissertation completes the work needed to acquire a degree in the field of education.

a *Curriculum Vitae*).

Given the program's complementary character, the number of course offerings and program requirements would most likely need to be limited. However, the basic design of the program could be organized according to praxis dynamics, which would also provide room for incorporating some of the curricular and programmatic ideas recommended by this study's participants. A key component of the program would be its collaborative character. Significant players from existing programs would need to be included in the final design of the public service program so that course offerings and program elements could fit seamlessly into the existing degree programs. These considerations are incorporated into the following program recommendations.

Applying the Praxis Lens to Program Design

In short, the following recommendations are structured according to the three movements of the Praxis Lens used in this study: 1) gravitation, 2) engagement, and 3) assessment. The specific recommended courses and instructional strategies will be matched with each of these praxis movements with the understanding, once again, that they do not reflect distinct stages. Accordingly, any learning outcomes that might be articulated in the creation of this program should resist definition that segregates one movement from the larger praxis cycle. That said, the following recommendations are focused on maximizing the type of development in future public service undergraduates that was observed in our respondents.

Program Elements Related to Gravitation

Program elements that fall within the gravitation movement would be included for the purpose of stoking the flame of public service interest among undergraduates. Though caution should be exercised in assuming that all students with a professional public service future are

already cognizant of their public service desires, the example of our respondents suggests a high probability that these students already have some interest in pursuing careers in the public sector. This would be especially true of individuals who have declared majors in the fields listed above.

To accomplish *gravitation* goals, one suggestion would be to design a course that revolves around the study of citizenship as a concept and the practical implications related to citizenship, perhaps as a part of the school's core curriculum. Clearly, a course of this nature would address academic concerns by exploring the concept and theories of citizenship. As a way of helping students (and faculty, to be honest) identify public sector career possibilities, this course could also use surveys and/or questionnaires designed to encourage self-assessment as a way of bringing awareness of public service interest. Additionally, this course could incorporate community-based service learning that not only puts students in service situations but allows them opportunities to reflect on the experiences, especially in terms of gauging whether professional public service is for them.

Understanding that the creation of such a course and its insertion into the school's core curriculum faces the same programmatic redesign challenges outlined above, this course could be offered as a cross-disciplinary elective. In terms of the proposed program, a course like this could also serve as a prerequisite for other courses within the program. Those courses might include: 1) Introduction to Public Service - during which students would be introduced to the world of professional public service both conceptually and practically; 2) Public Service Ethics - where ethical theory and practice would intersect with real-world applications; and 3) Public Service Organizations and Administration - this course would survey the varying types of public service organizations and administrative behaviors needed to operate them and would also make

skill development - particularly hard skills - a priority.[67] Additionally, where possible, credit could be given for courses completed as a part of the students' degree programs (e.g., American Government, Introduction to Statistics, Research Methods).

Perhaps it goes without saying that another important element of this program would be the recruitment aspect. Faculty and advisors associated with the program could promote this program both to high school recruits as well as students currently enrolled in public service-related degree programs. Once again, assuming that future public servants bear a resemblance to the respondents of this study, the educational experience offered by this program could tap into existing public service interests and provide opportunities for students to "test the waters" and discover for themselves whether professional public service is a path they want to pursue.

Program Elements Related to Engagement

Many of the *engagement* aims of the program would be achieved through instructional methods and course curriculum. For example, as previously noted, the use of service learning as a requirement of specific courses would offer students opportunities to engage in active service. As a part of the program requirements, students could be incentivized to pursue service opportunities outside the classroom through either on-campus clubs and student organizations or off-campus charitable non-profits.[68]

Several *engagement* aspects could also be addressed through the adoption of specific instructional strategies woven into course designs. As was indicated by the respondents' educational recommendations, as well as recommendations from educational scholars, specific

[67] If designed well, this course might serve as a prerequisite for, or at least an introduction to, graduate programs in public administration.

[68] Involvement with these types of service organizations would also increase student exposure to the world of public service as well as providing networking possibilities.

instructional approaches such as team-based and problem-based learning, and the use of case studies and simulations could provide students with vital interactions with the rigors of professional public service. As was also recommended, interactions with public service professionals, whether as guest lecturers, panelists, or even, possible mentors, could also be incorporated into the curriculum, especially in a course like Introduction to Public Service.

The final component of the program aimed at addressing matters of *engagement* would be the incorporation of practicums and internships. While these experiences would be a requirement of the program, the complementary aspect of the program would allow for students to receive dual credit for a single practicum/internship. For example, any education majors enrolled in this program could apply their student teaching experiences, which would most certainly be a required element of their degree programs, to the practicum/internship requirement of the public service program. Additional, albeit minimal, coursework (e.g., reflective papers, post-experience interviews, cohort discussion sessions) could be added to the practicum or internship experiences that would help achieve both the *engagement* and the *assessment* aims of the program.

Program Elements Related to Assessment[69]

Similar to the *engagement* goals of the program, the program's *assessment* aims would most likely be achieved primarily through course designs and instructional approaches. In this respect, *assessment* would be a standard objective of every course, most notably in connection to the evaluation of student learning. Instructors would be asked to create assignments and activities similar to the post-internship assignments referenced above that would provide students with opportunities to experience the same types of self-reflections, evaluations, and re-orientations

[69] In the interest of clarity, I am using "assessment" here in reference to the Praxis Lens and not to learning assessments, though, in the grand scheme, those would certainly need to be included.

that were observed in the public service journeys of our participants.

Beyond the classroom, I envision that the program would also include some element of career planning that would also accentuate *assessment* aims. While this aspect may take on different forms depending on institutional advising and career planning services, an essential program component would involve mentors and coaches working alongside the program's students to assist them in charting their career paths; taking the necessary steps to prepare for their post-graduation careers, which may include encouraging them to pursue graduate degrees, linking them to professional public service opportunities, and supporting them as they transition from college students to public servants.

Limitations of the Study

At first glance, the main limitations of this study may appear to be related to the generalization of the findings. Since qualitative studies are more concerned with understanding phenomena than establishing generalizable theories, it is difficult to say that a lack of universality is an actual study limitation. That said, it is important to admit that our findings may not be generally reflective of all public servants, which may moderate confidence in any recommendations based on our research.

In a similar vein, perhaps the most significant limitation of this study is related to the question of representation. Stated simply, I have continuously wondered whether the 13 individuals with whom I had the privilege of meeting and interacting are representative of other individuals, especially within the United States, who are in similar positions and carry similar responsibilities. Given the fact that only the members of the specific geographical groups would have potentially known each other and considering that the range of individual narratives had numerous characteristics in common, despite geographical distance and organizational

differences, I believe that the pantheon of public servants may well resemble the participants in this study more than they do not. However, the fact remains that these individuals were remarkable, which was most likely the reason they were recommended for this study in the first place. Accordingly, this study may be guilty of selection bias that might be mitigated in future studies by the inclusion of a larger group of participants.

Considerations for Future Research

In light of the study's limitations, two specific lines of inquiry emerge as possible avenues for future research. Both are related to implications connected to the interpretative Praxis Lens used to analyze the data. Accordingly, the recommendations for future research are focused on two questions. First, would other studies that resemble our research reveal similar praxis dynamics in the public service journeys of their participants? Second, how effective is the praxis paradigm as a construct for educational programs?

Since the Praxis Lens arose in response to the data generated by the respondent interviews, I am curious if other researchers who had similarly structured studies would discover the same dynamics at work in the public servants involved in their studies. I am reticent to suggest that the Praxis Lens be used as a kind of interpretive model. However, as a point of reference, could these researchers find the Praxis Lens useful for interpreting their data? Of course, switching to a quantitative methodology that tests the validity of the praxis concept, we could discover whether the phenomenon observed in this study is common among individuals who pursue public service careers. This would also serve to verify if the suspected selection bias of this study was actual or perceived. Clearly, studies of this kind would require a larger and more random sample of public servants.

A second area of focus for future study involves an analysis of program designs that are

based on the praxis movements identified in this study. This presumes, however, that such educational programs exist. Perhaps the proposed public service program could serve as a test case. It is conceivable that both qualitative and quantitative methods could be used to explore the effectiveness of a program built on praxis principles. For example, we might design a longitudinal study that tested student attitudes about their educational experiences in the public service program at key points throughout the program. One advantage of this approach is that researchers could gather data in "real time" as students reflected on the impact of the program during their collegiate experiences rather than in retrospect.

Another approach would be to create a qualitative study that explores the perceptions of graduating seniors who have or are about to complete the public service program. Questions could be designed to illicit responses relative to the different praxis movements to see whether the expected praxis dynamics were, in fact, realized or remained theoretical. One downside to this approach would be that the students interviewed would, like our respondents, provide historical reflections on their experiences rather than offering their observations while their degree work was in progress. To offset this limitation, the selected group of respondents could be interviewed at multiple points during their degree work to better understand the continuity of their experiences and the effect of the educational program.

There is no doubt that other types of studies that could spring from our research. One of the challenges of identifying possible areas of research is rooted in our qualitative methodology. Given the inductive character of qualitative studies, no hypotheses were tested, which means that expected outcomes were never identified. As can be seen in my recommendations for future study, my interests are still focused on understanding the phenomena associated with public service career decision-making, especially of college students. Perhaps with a little more

thought, other questions and research problems may be identified that would help us understand why young people, especially in today's world, would invest their professional lives in serving the greater good.

In Conclusion

Irrespective of the larger implications of our research, we conclude this study with a degree of optimism about the future of public service education. If it is true, as the findings suggest, that we are even now in the presence of potential public servants who share the same passions and aspirations as our participants, the role of civic education aimed at preparing and unleashing future public servants may be as crucial as ever. That thought by itself is motivation enough to make sure that the lessons we learn from individuals like our participants will inform and guide educators to create the most effective educational programming we can provide so these individuals can be released to make their public service desires a reality. Whether naïve or idealistic, I cling to the hope that as these young people enter the realm of public service, society will be changed, and the world will become the kind of place many of us have worked to achieve for a very long time.

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