

Testing Public Administration's Separation of Powers Theory: Exploratory Support from a Study of Public and Private Sector Jobs

Richard M. Clerkin^a, Robert K. Christensen^b, and Harin Woo^c

^aNorth Carolina State University; ^bBrigham Young University; ^cUniversity of Georgia

ABSTRACT

David Rosenbloom's separation of powers approach to understanding the complex value-driven work of public administrators is an oft-cited, conceptually powerful framework. This article is a first effort to empirically test his framework. It explores the extent to which Rosenbloom's distinct and normative value sets (managerial, political, and legal) objectively reflect individuals' perceptions of how public servants should perform their jobs and the role that public service motivation (PSM) may play in these evaluations. It finds that when comparing public sector and private sector jobs, individuals assign more similar levels of importance to the managerial, political, and legal values for public than private sector jobs, thus providing support for the importance of public administrators to integrate these three approaches in their work. Additionally, it finds that the higher an individual's PSM, the more likely that a political or legal frame, rather than a managerial frame, will be the individual's primary approach to management.

KEYWORDS

motives; sector; separation of powers theory; values

Multiple theories compete with and complement each other to describe the domain of public administration. An important part of this effort is the work of those scholars who have drawn attention to key distinctions between private and public sector organizations and employees (e.g., Boyne, 2002; Rainey, 2014; Van der Wal & Huberts, 2008).

Within the public sector, however, scholars continue to theorize and test what it means to be “public” or to develop public administrative theory. The theoretical pluralism around these fundamental questions is not new for public administration (e.g., Denhardt & Catlaw, 2014; Frederickson, Smith, Larimer, & Licari, 2003; Miller & Fox, 2007), and many attempts have been made to bring some structure and coherence to this natural state of theoretical contest (e.g., Wamsley & Zald, 1973).

One of the most widely incorporated contemporary approaches (Rosenbloom, 1983) embraces the contest by focusing attention on the

CONTACT Richard M. Clerkin ✉ richard_clerkin@ncsu.edu 📍 NC State, Institute for Nonprofits, CB7011, Raleigh, NC 27695, USA.

Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/mpmr.

© 2017 Taylor & Francis

competing values and functions underpinning the practice and purpose of public administration (e.g., Christensen, 2009; Thompson, 2015).

The goal of this article is to empirically explore the extent to which Rosenbloom's (1983) public administrative theory might be reflected in public sentiment. Although Rosenbloom's normative theory informs many studies and even a prominent public administration textbook, the theory remains relatively empirically untested. Specifically, an online quasi-experimental survey is used to explore whether college-aged citizens exhibit different expectations of public sector employees who otherwise have job functions similar to private sector employees. In short, it probes whether college-aged respondents exhibit a sense for the more complex, even competing, values—as Rosenbloom's work suggests—involved in public jobs.

The empirical research represented in this article finds significant sector-based differences in the expectations of respondents across job-pairs, and discusses how these exploratory findings might serve as an initial step in filling a gap in the literature to test and expand a popular theory of public administration. These exploratory findings (a) help scholars better establish public administrative theory with empirical evidence, and (b) benefit educators in designing curriculum and professional training for young people, especially those who pursue careers in the public sector. To this end, this study can help politicians, public managers, and executives understand the complex and multiple values that operate in public service. The sections that follow review the literature the study adds to, describe the data and methods used to explore the data, and finally discuss the data to support the above claims of the impact and use of this research for theory and practice.

Rosenbloom's competing values framework

Public administration scholars—including Kaufman (1956), Rosenbloom (1983), and Hood (1991)—have observed the complexity of public administrators' work in terms of the many values or priorities that it is expected to satisfy. For example, in his classic treatment of New Public Management (NPM), Hood (1991) draws attention to three clusters of administrative values that have important implications for testing and understanding administrative design in the public sector. From a manager's perspective, van der Wal and Huberts (2008) offer some evidence about core sector values distinguishing public and private service. In addition to institutional and managerial perspectives, others have offered a citizen-based perspective about the values implicit in public service. For example, Marvel (2016) recently observed that citizens often exhibit implicit, negative, and relatively inelastic bias in assessing public administrative performance as inefficient or inflexible.

The goal of this article is relatively narrow but fits appropriately in the constellation of work seeking to identify and understand the core and

complex values inherent in public service. Specifically, the article takes up Rosenbloom's (1983) public administrative theory as one of the earlier "classic" voices seeking to promote understanding about the values of public administration. Unlike Hood's (1991) work, which has spawned more empirical examination, Rosenbloom's (1983) normative theory has gone largely unexamined empirically, although it is relied upon widely in the field. The goal of this exploratory study is to empirically examine Rosenbloom's propositions.

In 1983, Rosenbloom argued that three constitutionally grounded lenses circumscribe public administration based on the functional mandates of the political, managerial, and legal domains. Described in greater detail below, these values are based on the separation of powers logic of the U.S. Constitution, and Rosenbloom explains, "it is largely true that each of these approaches (political, managerial, and legal) is associated with the values embodied in a different branch of government" (p. 224), as described in Articles I-III, respectively.

These three domains, defined in the Constitution's separation of powers, are thereby characterized by distinct sets of priorities and normative values—each often at odds with the others. While these domains ultimately collapse to constitute the confluence of administrative functions, "each lens shows a well-established ... approach for structuring thinking about how managerial, political, and legal values have developed and driven public administrative organizational structures and conceptualizations of individuals who are affected by administrative decisions, behavior, and operations" (Rosenbloom, 2013, p. 382).

In reflecting on the separation of powers framework, Rosenbloom (2013) notes that its utility has primarily been its functional focus: mapping the separate constitutionally implied mandates of the three broad roles of public administration that guide the legislation (Article II), execution (Article I), and adjudication (Article III) inherent in those jobs. While a functional approach is certainly relevant to the present inquiry, the focus of this article is on the values ascribed to each domain. More specifically, it explores the extent to which Rosenbloom's distinct and normative value sets objectively reflect individual perceptions of how public servants should perform their jobs.

Analyzing the role of values in the administrative state is not new. Indeed, Dahl (1947, p. 11) contended that a science of public administration would be impossible until "the place of normative values is made clear." In a seeming attempt to address part of this challenge, Kaufman's (1956) analysis focused on the extent to which the competing values of representativeness, neutral competence, and executive leadership shaped the environment of public administration. Years earlier, White's (1939) seminal text on public administration amplified managerial values and priorities, an approach which rivaled the legal values and priorities espoused in Wilson's (1887) essay. Waldo's

(1948) field-defining text assessing the administrative state emphasized political values and theory.

The separation of powers framework theorized by Rosenbloom embraces each of these emphases: managerial, legal, and political. The approach in this article explicitly recognizes that public administration is defined not only by theoretical and functional pluralism but also by value pluralism (see also Spicer, 2001). Therefore the examination is centered on the competing value sets in these multiple domains. Waldo summarizes these respective value sets while reminding the field that public managers

must find the proper way to put ... together the executive branch ... and the emphasis ... upon *effectiveness and efficiency*. For the legislative branch ... the emphasis is upon the values of *representativeness and responsiveness*. For the judicial branch ... the emphasis is on *constitutional integrity* on one side and substantive and *procedural protections for individuals* on the other. Realistically our public administration does consist of varying mixtures of these three approaches or clusters. It is not just undesirable; it is impossible to narrow the concerns of public administration to any one of them. Our task is to find the proper way to put the three together. (Quoted in Brown & Stillman, 1985, pp. 463–464, emphasis added).

Rosenbloom (1983) consistently points out that these “separate” values are often in conflict with one another. Efficiency, for example, is rarely simultaneously achieved in pursuing individual constitutional rights; litigating individual cases is expensive and time-consuming.

Research questions

There has been little empirical evidence to describe the extent to which Rosenbloom’s ideas capture the way individuals might instinctively appreciate a theory of public administration that is based on the conflict and confluence of separate values. If the popular press were the sole measure, for example, it would certainly appear that citizens do not appreciate the “value” of competing values. Marvel’s (2016) work offers some confirmation of this. As such, bureaucrat bashing remains a popular pastime. Measuring government’s success by efficiency alone gives plenty of cause to poorly rate government performance. However, if other values and metrics are used, the performance of government becomes at once both more complicated and perhaps attractive (e.g., Van Dooren, De Caluwe, & Lonti, 2012) and appreciated.

All of this may rest, however, in how individual citizens formulate their expectations of individual public servants (see also Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013). In making these expectations explicit by attaching them to often-conflicting values, perhaps one can begin to understand whether the normative arguments put forth by Rosenbloom are empirically justified in the human psyche, where perceptions and motivations can shape opinions and expectations.

Regarding motivation, the recent rise of the public service motivation literature cannot be ignored. Few studies until now have focused on citizens' public service motivation (but see Braender & Andersen, 2014; Perry, Brudney, Coursey, & Littlepage, 2008); the present article does so in order to account for the possibility that citizens' public service motivations shape their expectations and value priorities.

The purpose of this exploratory study is to begin to empirically test and describe the separation of public administrative values theory. The specific research question is whether Rosenbloom's separation of powers theory and the values underlying it provide a verifiable way to distinguish between public and private managerial priorities. The separation of powers theory is a powerful way to conceptualize the distinctiveness of public administrative functions, but does it have empirical validity in terms of the way people view public vs. private jobs, or the expectations they have of the individuals filling those jobs?

Rosenbloom's work suggests that the foundation of public administration is based on distinct political, managerial, and legal values, and that the public sector should consistently reflect more of these values than the private sector, which is predominantly driven by managerial values and has neither the same constitutional obligations nor the same institutional genesis that the Constitution imparts to public organizations.

Based on these theoretical assumptions, the present study aims to directly test whether citizens ascribe different value expectations to the public and private sectors, respectively. It hypothesizes that if Rosenbloom is correct, citizens may implicitly differentiate their value expectations for employees with similar jobs by whether the job is located in the public or the private sector. More specifically, it explores whether citizens expect a broader variety of values (e.g., legal and political in addition to managerial) in public sector jobs.

The authors are unaware of any prior studies with direct bearing on this hypothesis. However, their thinking is partly informed by Andrews and Van de Walle's (2013) study of citizen perceptions of local services, in which sector—in the form of public-private involvement—consistently impacted how citizens viewed four dimensions of service performance. As is explained below, this is operationalized with measures of variance in competing value assignments, managerial efficiency, political representativeness, and legal-individual rights, for example. Lower variance corresponds to a more even distribution of how respondents weigh the various values. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: More similar levels of importance will be given to legal, political, and managerial values for public sector jobs than for private sector jobs.

Second, it is posited that individual public service motivation (PSM) might influence value expectations for similar jobs in the two different sectors. With the increasing evidence that individual motives shape key dynamics in public

service, the study explores the issue of whether individual public service motivations shape value expectations for jobs. The proposition finds its intuition in past work that demonstrates a positive correlation between PSM and perception of red tape (Scott & Pandey, 2005). These scholars utilized attribution theory to explain how employees with high PSM might associate red tape/rules with an internal attribution that legitimizes such rules and values. Similarly, it is possible that citizens with high PSM may be more likely to legitimately attribute multiple values to public sector jobs. In terms of the present study, this would be manifest as less variance (i.e., greater equality in rating values) in a respondent's rating of public sector jobs as compared to private sector jobs. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, and the relatively scant empirical work on which to directly base its suppositions, this is articulated as a proposition rather than a hypothesis. Therefore, the following is suggested:

Proposition 1: A respondent's PSM will be negatively related to variances in the respondent's value assignments to public sector jobs, such that as PSM increases, the respondent will give more similar levels of importance to legal, political, and managerial values for public sector jobs than for private sector jobs.

Data and methods

Data

This study employs quasi-experimental survey data from 154 undergraduate students at a large public university. The term "quasi-experimental" is used because assignments to treatment conditions were not randomized and a control group was not introduced at this exploratory stage.

The population of respondents who participated in the survey lacked significant job experience or formal exposure to sector differences. In this exploratory study, an undergraduate student population was chosen not only for convenience but also in hopes of minimizing some of the bias toward public sector/government that can solidify and become relatively inelastic over time (e.g., Marvel, 2016). An undergraduate population enables exploration of Rosenbloom's theory in a population that is adult but still relatively neutral, if not malleable, in their beliefs. As Oppenheimer (1999, p. 22) observed regarding undergraduates and their openness to his own field (psychology):

Unlike many of the lay public who have preconceived notions of psychology and who are resistant to change, undergraduate students have had little exposure to the field and are much more flexible about their views of the nature of the discipline. Two of the many reasons that students attend college are to challenge their perceptions of the world, and to expand their world view.

Participants' demographic information is as follows: The number of students expressing male gender (58.08%) is slightly more than the number

expressing female gender (41.12%). White students were the majority of respondents (79.48%) in the survey, followed by Black (8.33%), Latino (5.12%), and others. Freshmen (43.75%) formed the plurality of participants in the survey, followed by sophomore (30.55%), junior (15.28%), and senior (10.42%) participants. Considering respondents' age ranges, it was not surprising that most respondents had little or no work experience.

Variables

With this population, the study asked questions about how students assessed values and measured their individual PSMs according to items described in Kim et al. (2013).

The primary dependent variable of interest measures the weight respondents assigned to values they felt were important to each of the 12 jobs (six pairs) described in the survey. To assess value assignment, respondents were asked to divide 15 points into three, separate domains of value priorities based on Rosenbloom's (1983) work discussed above. All respondents were presented with all 12 job descriptions, though in random order so as not to induce survey bias related to question order. The values for the three domains were described as follows:

- **Political:** citizen representation, accountability, responsiveness
- **Managerial:** efficiency, economy
- **Legal:** individual rights, constitutional integrity

The dependent variable is therefore a measurement of how respondents balance or weigh competing value priorities. For example, if a respondent read a job description and assigned it five points of political values, five points of managerial values, and five points of legal values, that job would be described as "balanced" or equally weighted in terms of the priorities Rosenbloom describes in his separation of powers public administrative theory.

Six job pairings were used to aid in the analysis. This bundle of jobs was chosen to introduce variety in the industries and types of jobs within each sector while trying to maintain as much comparability across sectors as possible. The job pairings were as follows (public-private): city police officer-private sector security guard; budget director for a large state government agency-chief financial officer (CFO) for a large private corporation; county prosecuting attorney-corporate attorney; public high school teacher-teacher in a private high school; city parks & recreation director-manager of a private gym; department of motor vehicles employee-department store clerk.

While these jobs were presented and analyzed as dyads, they were presented in a randomized order to each respondent. The descriptive statistics for each job and the comparative statistics for each job dyad are presented in Table 1. The information presented in the table compares the overall variance in the value weightings the respondents provided for each job dyad,

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Job	Obs.	Mean			t	Value	Obs.	Mean				
		variance	SD	Min				Max	value	SD	Min	Max
Police officer	144	7.037	9.12	0	50	1.7204	Managerial	144	3.10	1.7369	0	7
							Legal	144	7.09	2.3750	0	15
							Political	144	4.79	2.1240	0	15
Security guard	143	5.66	7.61	0	50		Managerial	143	4.11	2.2738	0	10
							Legal	144	6.17	2.2826	0	15
							Political	144	4.74	2.1418	0	9
Budget director for state government	144	5.49	7.78	0	32	-1.9859*	Managerial	144	6.84	2.3877	0	13
							Legal	144	4.14	1.5327	0	8
							Political	144	4.01	1.8472	0	10
Chief financial officer for private company	144	6.77	9.02	0	50		Managerial	144	7.20	2.5681	0	15
							Legal	144	4.26	1.6171	0	8
							Political	144	3.53	1.9102	0	10
County prosecuting attorney	143	5.72	6.62	0	50	0.2577	Managerial	143	3.21	1.8956	0	10
							Legal	144	6.98	2.1055	0	15
							Political	144	4.81	1.6876	0	10
Corporate attorney	143	5.59	7.33	0	50		Managerial	143	4.96	2.4478	0	12
							Legal	143	6.06	2.2318	0	15
							Political	143	3.96	1.9224	0	8
Public school teacher	143	4.49	8.41	0	50	0.0138	Managerial	143	4.59	2.3801	0	15
							Legal	143	5.33	1.6356	0	10
							Political	143	5.06	2.2254	0	15
Private school teacher	143	4.44	6.00	0	32.67		Managerial	144	4.84	2.4072	0	13
							Legal	144	5.00	1.7501	0	9
							Political	143	5.18	2.2264	0	13
City parks & recreation director	143	3.87	6.57	0	40.67	-4.0779*	Managerial	143	5.79	2.0991	0	14
							Legal	143	4.60	1.7960	0	13
							Political	143	4.60	1.7688	0	10
Private gym manager	142	7.92	12.08	0	50		Managerial	143	6.76	3.2651	1	15
							Legal	142	4.14	1.9591	0	9
							Political	143	4.12	2.3523	0	11
DMV employee	143	4.96	8.19	0	50	-3.8536*	Managerial	143	5.67	2.5799	0	15
							Legal	143	4.83	1.9282	0	12
							Political	143	4.48	1.9604	0	10
Department store clerk	143	8.76	14.00	0	50		Managerial	143	6.92	3.3985	0	15
							Legal	143	4.22	2.2143	0	12
							Political	143	3.85	2.1817	0	10

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

which drives how the hypotheses were evaluated, and shows the how respondents weighted the managerial, legal, and political domains of management.

The columns in the left half of Table 1 report the comparative statistics for each job dyad. The mean variance column measures the average of the variance for each respondent's assignment of values for each job. The formula used to create this variable, $[(\text{managerial value} - 5)^2 + (\text{legal value} - 5)^2 + (\text{political value} - 5)^2]$, is similar to the mathematical formula to calculate a variable's variance. However, since it is hypothesized that public managers need to balance their managerial, legal, and political values to successfully accomplish their jobs, the formula used an expected mean of 5 to capture the variance from this normative expectation based on Rosenbloom's

separation of powers public administrative theory. The standard deviation, minimum, and maximum columns report the descriptive statistics for the average of the values variance reported in the mean variance column. The t -statistic is a measure of the statistical significance of the difference in mean variance for each job dyad.

For example, the top two rows on the left half of Table 1 contain information for comparing the police officer–private security guard dyad. The mean variance is 7.04 for police officers and 5.66 for the private security guard. The t -statistic column helps in evaluating whether these two values are statistically significantly different from each other. In this case, with a t -statistic less than 1.96 (the usual cut-off for the $p < 0.05$ level of statistical significance), the difference is not statistically significant.

The columns in the right half of Table 1 contain information about how respondents weighted each of the three domains of management. They report the average of how the respondents apportioned the 15 points to the managerial, legal, and political values that should be used for each job. The standard deviation, minimum, and maximum report the descriptive statistics for the average of each public administrative domain.

For example, the top six rows on the right half of Table 1 contain information for how respondents apportioned the 15 points for police officers (first three rows) and private security guards (second three rows). For both jobs, respondents more heavily weighted legal values (7.09 for police officers, 6.17 for security guards) than managerial values and political values.

Items to measure public service motivation are from Kim et al.'s 16-item scale (2013), and the four dimensions of attraction to public service, compassion, self-sacrifice, and commitment to public values are identified with confirmatory factor analysis.¹ The goodness-of-fit statistics (RMSEA = 0.064; CFI = 0.953; TLI = 0.43) all indicate good fit between the model and the data. Continuous factor scores are used in the analysis that follows. Respondents were also asked to rank how being a manager, a politician, or a judge best described themselves. On average, respondents ranked perceiving themselves as a manager (2.47) higher than as a judge (1.89) or as a politician (1.64).

Finally, the respondents' self-framing of the dominant approach of their work values were captured by asking them to rank the answers (manager, judge, politician) to the question "I am best described as" from 3 (*phrase best describes me*) to 1 (*phrase is least like me*).

Hypothesis 1 was tested through a difference-of-means test for the mean variance values for each job dyad. Based on Hypothesis 1, the mean variance for the public sector job in the dyad was expected to be lower than the mean variance for the private sector job in the dyad. Proposition 2 was explored by examining pairwise correlations to look for patterns between an individual's motivation for public service and the mean variance of value expectation for each job.

Analysis and results

Values and sector differences

Hypothesis 1. The analysis begins by exploring some general differences the respondents perceived between values in public and private sector jobs.

The average total scores for managerial, legal, political values for all jobs in each sector are reported in [Table 2](#). These are calculated by summing up the respondent's answers for each of the values across the six jobs in each sector. In general, respondents tended to weight managerial values for private sector jobs and legal values for public sector jobs as the most important.

Since market-based paradigms associated with the private sector are frequently founded on a consensus around the value of efficiency, this result is not surprising. Respondents tended to evaluate private sector jobs with higher scores in managerial values than their public sector job counterparts. To directly test these relationships, a series of *t*-tests were run to measure the difference in mean between average managerial values weighting on each public–private job dyad reported in [Table 1](#). For each of the public–private sector job dyads, other than the public high school teacher–private high school teacher comparison, the managerial value for the private sector job is statistically significantly greater ($p < 0.05$ for a one-tailed test) than the value for the public sector job. Overall, the respondents believed that the managerial values of efficiency and economy are of greater importance in private sector jobs than in public sector jobs.

To examine these value weightings visually for each of the job pairings, [Figure 1](#) was generated. It shows the average scores for Rosenbloom's separate values as they apply to each job. The spider chart's axes juxtapose public/private job pairings, with public jobs in the right hemisphere and private jobs in the left hemisphere. Respondents displayed a tendency to maximize the value of effectiveness, efficiency, and economy in private sector jobs such as department store clerk and private gym manager, while the more political values of responsiveness, responsibility, and accountability were typically prioritized for public sector jobs.

While the initial results show that efficiency is valued more highly in private sector roles, this analysis does not get to the heart of the inquiry about the balance among managerial, legal, and political values in private and public sector jobs. Hypothesis 1 supposes that public sector job value assignments will have lower variances than private sector job value assignments. [Table 3](#)

Table 2. Mean value of each administrative value by sector.

	Public	Private
Managerial	29.20	34.79
Legal	32.97	29.85
Political	27.75	25.38

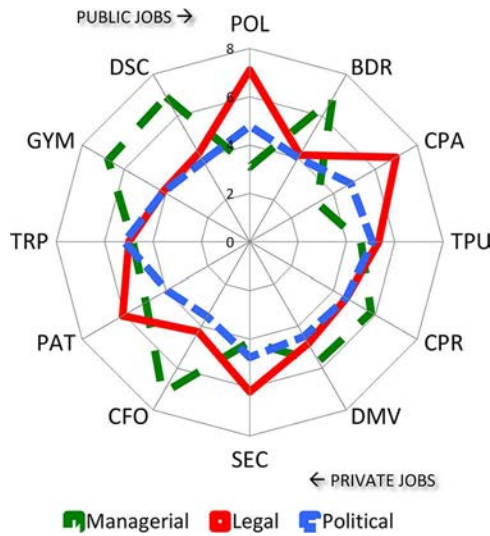


Figure 1. Comparing separate values across sector pairings.

Legend: POL: police officer; SEC: security guard; BDR: budget director for state government; CFO: chief financial officer for private company; CPA: county prosecuting attorney; PAT: corporate attorney; TPU: public school teacher; TRP: private school teacher; CPR: city parks & recreation director; GYM: private gym manager; DMV: DMV employee; DSC: department store clerk.

Note: Jobs in the opposite direction are similar jobs in public and private sectors (i.e., POL-SEC).

reports the results from four difference-of-means tests. The first test examines the overall difference in the mean variance of values between public sector and private sector jobs. The three subsequent tests explore for differences in the mean variance for managerial, legal, and political values between all public and private sector jobs respectively.

The average variance of values assigned is 5.20 for public sector jobs and 6.37 for private sector jobs. A *t*-test for the difference in these two values ($n = 139$) returns a *t*-score of 3.06, indicating that this difference is statically significant. These results generally appear to be consistent with Rosenbloom's theory of separation of administrative values, which suggests that citizens perceive that the three domains of values should be more balanced in public sector jobs than

Table 3. Test of significance of difference between public and private jobs and public values (variance).

	Mean variance	SD	t	p	df	n
All values, all public jobs	5.2022	5.0444	-3.0634	0.0026**	138	139
All values, all private jobs	6.3731	6.8459				
Managerial values in public jobs	6.6784	7.4042	-3.9709	0.0001***	140	141
Managerial values in private jobs	9.5768	12.0187				
Legal values in public jobs	5.1748	5.8695	1.0055	0.3164	141	142
Legal values in private jobs	4.7409	5.5403				
Political values in public jobs	3.9460	4.2571	-3.8350	0.0002***	141	142
Political values in private jobs	5.3852	5.1798				

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

in private sector jobs. The same is true if the view is isolated to just managerial or political values; less variance for public sector jobs. Interestingly, there is greater consensus (lower variance) around the role of legal values in private sector jobs, but this finding is not significantly different from the public sector findings. Overall, the results in [Table 3](#) suggest that respondents provide more similar levels of importance to managerial, legal, and political values in public sector jobs than in private sector jobs, providing support for the first hypothesis.

Returning now to the data provided in the left half of [Table 1](#) for a more detailed exploration of Hypothesis 1, consider the mean variance of the value weighting between dyads. The results at this more granular level tend to reveal more nuances (see the Appendix for additional visual presentation at this level) for how respondents weight the role of managerial, legal, and political values for jobs beyond just their location in the public ([Appendix Figure A1](#)) or private sector ([Appendix Figure A2](#)).

For half of the dyads (budget director for a large state government agency–chief financial officer (CFO) for a large private corporation, city parks & recreation director–private gym manager, and department of motor vehicles employee–department store clerk dyads), the mean variance is statistically significantly smaller ($p < 0.05$ for a one-tailed test) for the public than the private sector job, thus lending some support to the hypothesis. However, there is no statistically significant difference for two of the dyads (county prosecuting attorney–corporate attorney and public high school teacher–private high school teacher), and for the city police officer–private security guard dyad, the difference in the mean variance is opposite what is hypothesized and marginally statistically significant ($t = 1.72$). However, this last finding, in large part, is due to the respondents weighting the legal values much more heavily for the police officer than the managerial or political values, indicating that in some cases, it is the job rather than the sector of employment that drives whether individuals normatively believe that managerial, legal, and political values ought to have equal weight when people perform their duties.

Thus there was mixed support for the hypothesis: supported in general, but nuanced around specific job pairs.

Values and public service motivation

Proposition 1. The second part of this research assesses whether a respondent's PSM conditions value expectations in similar jobs across sectors. Increased levels of PSM may be indicative of the respondent's expectation that public sector employees need to balance managerial, legal, and political values in their jobs. It was proposed that as their PSM increases, respondents are more likely to balance their value assignments for public sector jobs, operationalized by lower variances in weighting the importance of the three administrative values. The correlation table used to examine this relationship is included in [Table 4](#).

Table 4. Correlations between PSM and value assignment.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
Overall PSM	1																			
1 Attraction to public service	0.9781*	1																		
2 Commitment to public values	0.9272*	0.9750*	1																	
3 Compassion	0.9826*	0.9859*	0.9249*	1																
4 Self-sacrifice	0.8549*	0.7543*	0.6277*	0.8179*	1															
5 All public sector job variance	0.055	0.0184	0.01	0.0283	0.0623	1														
6 All private sector job variance	0.0986	0.079	0.0692	0.0887	0.1277	0.7530*	1													
7 Police officer variance	0.0612	0.0169	-0.0235	0.0479	0.1418	0.6807*	0.4266*	1												
8 Chief financial officer variance	-0.0657	-0.0803	-0.1013	-0.0581	0.0132	0.4997*	0.6585*	0.3045*	1											
9 Private school teacher variance	0.0465	-0.0138	-0.0396	0.0106	0.1463	0.3613*	0.5298*	0.2565*	0.3414*	1										
10 County prosecuting attorney variance	0.1731*	0.1331	0.1168	0.1412	0.1393	0.7463*	0.5696*	0.5065*	0.3561*	0.2652*	1									
11 Budget director variance	0.0728	0.0637	0.0684	0.0619	0.0358	0.6248*	0.5020*	0.3103*	0.5866*	0.1253	0.3974*	1								
	0.0307	-0.001	-0.0465	0.0317	0.1519	0.4691*	0.5937*	0.3991*	0.4135*	0.3180*	0.3026*	0.3189*	1							

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
12 Private security guard variance	0.1277	0.1245	0.1407	0.11	0.092	0.5080*	0.7239*	0.1634	0.4320*	0.1285	0.4141*	0.4398*	0.3623*	1					
13 Corporate attorney variance	-0.0305	-0.0478	-0.0554	-0.0343	0.0031	0.6878*	0.5810*	0.2607*	0.2718*	0.3168*	0.4293*	0.2291*	0.1782*	0.4266*	1				
14 DMV worker variance	-0.0275	-0.0584	-0.0275	-0.0874	-0.0744	0.4923*	0.3344*	0.2077*	0.1741*	-0.0433	0.2777*	0.2964*	0.3699*	0.3005*	0.1854*	1			
15 City parks & recreation director variance	0.1645	0.1660*	0.1646*	0.1682*	0.1367	0.6535*	0.8695*	0.3564*	0.3927*	0.3001*	0.5031*	0.3616*	0.3702*	0.6170*	0.5382*	0.2137*	1		
16 Department store clerk variance	-0.0181	-0.0231	-0.0175	-0.0166	-0.0187	0.6107*	0.5117*	0.2179*	0.2211*	0.4071*	0.3061*	0.1739*	0.2471*	0.2537*	0.4903*	0.0737	0.5204*	1	
17 Public school teacher variance	0.0871	0.087	0.0945	0.0818	0.059	0.6308*	0.8438*	0.3343*	0.3691*	0.3455*	0.5155*	0.2982*	0.2949*	0.5504*	0.5713*	0.3233*	0.7717*	0.4038*	1

Notes: ** $p < 0.05$. Bold figures highlight correlations between PSM and weighting variance. Highlighted cells represent significant PSM weight variance correlations.

There were very few statistically significant correlations between PSM and variance in the values assigned to jobs in Table 4. As such, the results do not support the proposition that a higher PSM is associated with the lower variances in public sector jobs.²

Motivation: Self-perception

Given the lack of relationship between PSM and mean variance in job value weightings, the study examined the relationships between PSM and the extent to which respondents perceived themselves best described as a manager, a politician, or a judge. As seen in Table 5, the more respondents identified themselves as managers, the lower the level of all four PSM dimensions. Given the definition of PSM, a desire or interest to serve the public and to provide public good emphasizing equal opportunities and “selflessness” (Brewer & Selden, 1998), it was not unexpected that PSM and self-perception as a manager had a negative correlation. Individuals who appreciate managerial traditions, including efficiency, effectiveness, and other businesslike values, more than political and legal values may actually feel conflicted in pursuing a career in the public sector, where devotion to society and the public is emphasized.

On the other hand, the more respondents perceived themselves as a judge, the more an opposite relationship is seen: a positive correlation with each PSM dimension. There are two possible explanations. First, concepts of fairness, equity, and procedural due process in legal values are likely to relate to PSM dimensions such as attraction to policymaking and commitment to the public interest. Second, the judiciary is not about costs/benefits to secure individuals’ rights; instead, it is about the ways to protect these rights and society. Therefore, it is not surprising to see some empirical evidence that the managerial approach’s focus on efficiency is negatively associated with the legal tradition, as Rosenbloom argued.

In examining these correlations, PSM is found to be closely tied to individuals’ self-perceived managerial role. The lack of correlation between PSM and value assignment explored in the proposition, in conjunction with the positive correlation between PSM and self-perception, is consistent with

Table 5. Correlation between PSM and self-perception.

	Attraction	Commitment	Compassion	Self-sacrifice	Myself as manager	Myself as politician	Myself as judge
Attraction	1.0000						
Commitment	0.9750**	1.0000					
Compassion	0.9859**	0.9249**	1.0000				
Self-sacrifice	0.7543**	0.6277**	0.8179**	1.0000			
Myself as manager	-0.2032**	-0.1813**	-0.2133**	-0.2611**	1.0000		
Myself as politician	-0.0157	-0.056	0.0129	0.1067	-0.5490**	1.0000	
Myself as judge	0.2321**	0.2510**	0.2130**	0.1659**	-0.4886**	-0.4610**	1.0000

Note: ** $p < 0.05$.

research tending to indicate that PSM can be an important tool in recruiting and selecting people into public service. However, once they are in a particular job, PSM may not greatly (or even at all) influence how individuals do (or should) balance their managerial, legal, and political roles.

Discussion/conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory article is to begin to assess the extent to which the competing values in Rosenbloom's separation of powers theory are not only normatively but also descriptively accurate. A quasi-experimental survey design and a student sample were used to empirically show how job sector and individual public service motives are related to perceptions of Rosenbloom's managerial, legal, and political values. It was found that respondents generally exhibited lower variances (value equally placed on multiple values) when assessing public service positions than when assessing private positions (higher variances, typically favoring managerial values of efficiency). This was interpreted as initial empirical evidence supporting Rosenbloom's normative, theoretical description of the recognition that public managers should be more mindful (than private administrators) of competing value frames.

The study also found that while PSM does little to explain these value assignments, a respondent's self-perception (or view of self as lawyer-like or manager-like) bears a strong correlation to the respondent's PSM, regardless of dimension. In short, respondents who viewed themselves as managers were more likely to have lower levels of PSM. Respondents who viewed themselves as lawyers were more likely to have higher levels of PSM. These results provide initial empirical evidence that the political and legal values of Rosenbloom's framework are what distinguish public management from private management.

This exploratory work has obvious limitations beyond its single, cross-sectional design that relies on self-reported survey data. While the overall comparison of value variance among public and private sector jobs in the study appears valid and reliable, the same claim cannot be made for the dyad comparisons. In some cases, it is difficult to know if differences were found (or not found) because the study differentiated the sector or if the differences are related to the different characteristics of the job. In addition, using students as proxies for "citizens" misses out on years of interactions with government and private for-profit services that a more typical citizen might have, and which might reasonably shape how they ascribe various values to sector-based jobs. Thus, this exploratory work addresses the perceptions of undergraduates; it has value, because of their malleability, from a pedagogical perspective, but one can only speculate on how this might (or might not) apply to other, more entrenched populations of adults. Thus the authors recognize the need to incorporate more experimental elements into this

relatively rudimentary study. These would include random assignment to various treatment control groups in order to more accurately establish causality in some of the relationships raised here. Future work will be developed accordingly. Until then, the findings presented in this article can be regarded as encouraging first steps to strengthen the empirical aspects of one of public administration's most widely used theoretical lenses.

The main goal of this study has been to empirically explore the validity of Rosenbloom's widely used normative theory. The results of this exploratory research provide empirical evidence to support the veracity of Rosenbloom's theory; people perceive a greater need for integration of managerial, legal, and political values in public sector jobs than in private sector jobs. An important implication of the results for public managers recruiting individuals to public service is the need to attract people who are comfortable with managing through managerial, legal, and political lenses. The results also suggest the need to make sure that public administration students are educated about the political and legal contexts of the field and do not just focus on technical managerial skills.

Notes on contributors

Richard M. Clerkin, PhD, is executive director of the Institute for Nonprofits and Associate Professor in the Department of Public Administration at North Carolina State University. His research interests focus broadly on the nonprofit sector. In particular, he studies motivations for public service and public benefiting activities. He is a coauthor of the leading public administration textbook, *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector*, and his research has been published in journals such as *Public Administration Review*, *American Review of Public Administration*, *Armed Forces & Society*, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, and *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*.

Robert K. Christensen, JD/PhD, is an Associate Professor in Brigham Young University's Marriott School of Management. His research interests include attraction, motivation and work behaviors related to public service careers and organizations. He is a research fellow at Arizona State University's Center for Organization Research & Design and a co-researcher at Seoul National University's Center for Government Competitiveness. He and Jim Perry are co-editors of Wiley's *Handbook of Public Administration*.

Harin Woo is a PhD candidate in the Department of Public Administration and Policy at the University of Georgia. Her research interests include public employees' motivation and training, organizational learning, and science and technology policy.

Notes

1. As previous studies on PSM have proved (Andersen, Pallesen, & Pedersen, 2011; Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012), the four dimensions of PSM are interrelated with statistical significance.
2. This finding holds true whether PSM is measured unidimensionally or with each of the four subdimensions.

References

- Andersen, L. B., Pallesen, T., & Pedersen, L. H. (2011). Does ownership matter? Public service motivation among physiotherapists in the private and public sectors in Denmark. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 31(1), 10–27. doi:10.1177/0734371x10394402.
- Andrews, R., & Van de Walle, S. (2013). New Public Management and citizens' perceptions of local service efficiency, responsiveness, equity and effectiveness. *Public Management Review*, 15(5), 762–783. doi:10.1080/14719037.2012.725757
- Boyne, G. A. (2002). Public and private management: What's the difference? *Journal of Management Studies*, 39(1), 97–122. doi:10.1111/1467-6486.00284.
- Braender, M., & Andersen, L. B. (2014). Soldier and civilian motivation—different or similar? A comparison of public service motivation for civilians and military personnel. *Political and Military Sociology: An Annual Review*, 42, 1–28. Retrieved from <http://www.transactionpub.com/title/Political-and-Military-Sociology-978-1-4128-5472-6.html>
- Brewer, G. A., & Selden, S. C. (1998). Whistle blowers in the federal civil service: New evidence of the public service ethic. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 8(3), 413–440. doi:10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024390.
- Brown, B., & Stillman, R. (1985). A conversation with Dwight Waldo: An agenda for future reflection. *Public Administration Review*, 45(4), 459–467. doi:10.2307/3110029.
- Christensen, R. K. (2009). Running the constitution: Framing public administration. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 32(4), 604–609. doi:10.2753/pmr1530-9576320410.
- Dahl, R. A. (1947). The science of public administration: Three problems. *Public Administration Review*, 7(1), 1–11. doi:10.2307/972349
- Denhardt, R. B., & Catlaw, T. J. (2014). *Theories of public organization*. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.
- Frederickson, H. G., Smith, K. B., Larimer, C. W., & Licari, M. J. (2003). *The public administration theory primer*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Hood, C. (1991). A public management for all seasons? *Public Administration*, 69(1), 3–19. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9299.1991.tb00779.x.
- Kaufman, H. (1956). Emerging conflicts in the doctrines of public-administration. *American Political Science Review*, 50(4), 1057–1073. doi:10.2307/1951335.
- Kim, S., Vandenabeele, W., Wright, B. E., Andersen, L. B., Cerase, F. P., Christensen, R. K., ..., & De Vivo, P. (2013). Investigating the structure and meaning of public service motivation across populations: Developing an international instrument and addressing issues of measurement invariance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 23(1), 79–102. doi:10.1093/jopart/mus027.
- Marvel, J. D. (2016). Unconscious bias in citizens' evaluations of public sector performance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 26(1), 143–158. doi:10.1093/jopart/muu053.
- Miller, H., & Fox, C. J. (2007). *Postmodern public administration* (Rev. ed.). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. doi:10.4324/9781315706962.
- Oppenheimer, D. M. (1999) The undergraduate perspective: Wasted potential. *APS Observer*, 12(8), 22. Available at http://www.psychologicalscience.org/apssc/old_pages/Article-Observer2.PDF
- Perry, J. L., Brudney, J. L., Coursey, D., & Littlepage, L. (2008). What drives morally committed citizens? A study of the antecedents of public service motivation. *Public Administration Review*, 68(3), 445–458. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2008.00881.x.
- Rainey, H. G. (2014). *Understanding and managing public organizations*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

- Rosenbloom, D. H. (1983). Public administrative theory and the separation of powers. *Public Administration Review*, 43(3), 219–227. doi:10.2307/976330.
- Rosenbloom, D. H. (2013). Reflections on “public administrative theory and the separation of powers.” *American Review of Public Administration*, 43(4), 381–396. doi:10.1177/0275074013483167.
- Scott, P. G., & Pandey, S. K. (2005). Red tape and public service motivation findings from a national survey of managers in state health and human services agencies. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 25(2), 155–180. doi:10.1177/0734371x04271526.
- Spicer, M. W. (2001). Value pluralism and its implications for American public administration. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 23(4), 507–528. doi:10.1080/10841806.2001.11643542.
- Thompson, J. R. (2015). Value shifts in public sector human resource management a congressional perspective. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*. doi:10.1177/0734371x15605159.
- Van der Wal, Z., & Huberts, L. (2008). Value solidity in government and business: Results of an empirical study on public and private sector organizational values. *American Review of Public Administration*, 38(3), 264–285. doi:10.1177/0275074007309154.
- Van Dooren, W., De Caluwe, C., & Lonti, Z. (2012). How to measure public administration performance: A conceptual model with applications for budgeting, human resources management, and open government. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 35(3), 489–508. doi:10.2753/pmr1530-9576350306.
- Waldo, D. (1948). *The administrative state: A study of the political theory of American public administration*. New York, NY: Ronald Press. Available at <https://archive.org/details/administrativest00wald>
- Wamsley, G. L., & Zald, M. N. (1973). The political economy of public organizations. *Public Administration Review*, 33(1), 62–73. doi:10.2307/974786.
- White, L. D. (1939). *Introduction to the study of public administration*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Wilson, W. (1887). The study of administration. *Political Science Quarterly*, 2(2), 197–222. doi:10.2307/2139277.
- Wright, B. E., Moynihan, D. P., & Pandey, S. K. (2012). Pulling the levers: Transformation leadership, public service motivation and mission valence. *Public Administration Review*, 72(2), 206–215. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02496.x.

Appendix

For closer investigation in differentiating public administration values, scores were split in value assignments by sector to examine differences in constitutionally based approaches in the jobs. Figure A1 displays three public administrative traditions by job in public sector. Interestingly, each public job has different value expectation; among six public jobs, police officers and county prosecuting attorneys are expected to be more responsible and accountable than DMV employees and city parks & recreation directors, whose primary expected values are of efficiency and effectiveness.

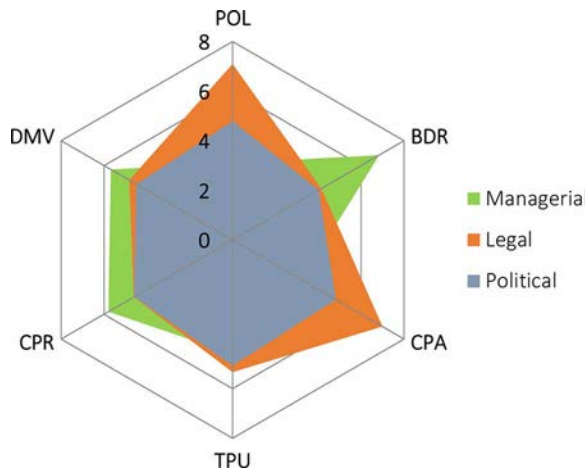


Figure A1. Values in public sector jobs.

Legend: POL: police officer; BDR: budget director for state government; CPA: county prosecuting attorney; TPU: public school teacher; CPR: city parks & recreation director; DMV: DMV employee.

Notes: Similar patterns are observed in private jobs. Managerial values are the main traditions for jobs in private sector rather than other values; however, degree of expected efficiency differs, depending on job. For instance, CFO for a large company, department store clerks, and private gym managers are expected to be more competent and efficient. In common, political traditions are the least expected value for private sector jobs.

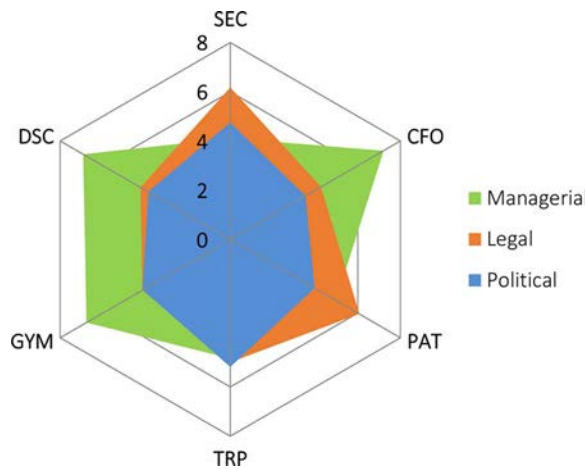


Figure A2. Values in private sector jobs.

Legend: SEC: security guard; CFO: chief financial officer for private company; PAT: corporate attorney; TPR: private school teacher; GYM: private gym manager; DSC: department store clerk.

Copyright of Public Performance & Management Review is the property of Taylor & Francis Ltd and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.