THE SISYPHUSIAN PREDICAMENT:

EXISTENTIALISM AND A GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS OF THE

EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

by

T. Lucas Hollar

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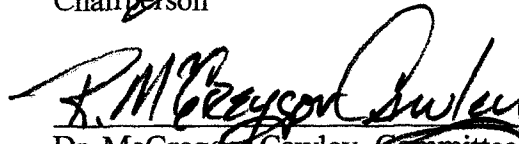## EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

by

T. Lucas Hollar

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Arthur Sementelli, School of Public Administration, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College of Architecture, Urban and Public Affairs and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
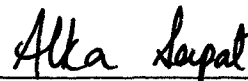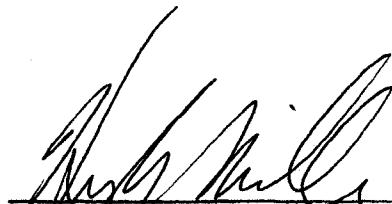
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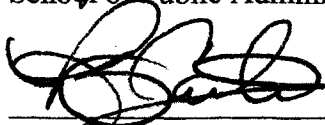_____
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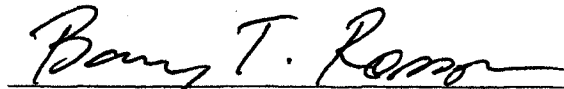Dr. McGregor Cawley, Committee
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Abstract

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Public administration addresses issues that competing and aligning groups determine to be meaningful enough to address. However, there seems to be no shared universally objective ways of remedying anything. Everything is up for argument. Additionally, attempting to solve one set of problems often creates other connected problems and/or unintended consequences. So, public work ever ends.

This dissertation's purpose was to contribute a new theoretical understanding of the experience and practice of public administration. Its research addressed if and how a grounded existential theoretical framework could emerge that would help practitioners and scholars understand and describe public administrative efforts and experiences. Currently, there is no existential theory of public administration. This dissertation sought to initiate work in that direction.

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This dissertation employed a grounded theory methodology to collect information from Senior Executive Service (SES) members, to analyze the information for emerging concepts and theoretical relevance through constant comparison, and to discover/construct a theoretical framework for understanding public administrative efforts and experiences. "The grounded theory approach is a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area" (Glaser, 1992, p. 16).

This dissertation identified the emergence of three categories/themes that organized what the SES members were saying, doing, and perceiving. These categories include "the environment," "the work," and "the individual." The core category/theme, "the Sisyphusian predicament," theoretically unifies these categories/themes through a metaphorical application of existential concepts. It describes the issues administrators experience (never-endingness, boundedness, and finitude in the face of infinitude) and the ways administrators address such issues (managing the scope and scale of one's intentions; generating and authoring relevance, significance, and meaning; and the choice for metaphysical revolt/microemancipation).

There are scholarly and practicable applications of this framework. This dissertation contributes exploratory work towards developing a new theoretical alternative within public administration. It provides an alternative approach for viewing and understanding organizational processes within public organizations. Additionally, an existential approach facilitates a plurality of competing schools of thought wherein administrators can select approaches to decision making and acting on the basis of context and utility.

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Introduction

"If I see a man armed only with a sword
attack a group of machine guns, I shall
consider his act to be absurd. But it is so
solely by virtue of the disproportion between
his intention and the reality he will
encounter, of the contradiction I notice
between his true strength and the aim he has
in view"
-Albert Camus (1991, p. 29)

"Public service presents the absurdity of the
human condition, and demands at the same
time that it be accepted and dealt with –
effectively"
-O.C. McSwite (2002, p. 97)

1.1 Research Interest and Importance

Public administration assumes that there are public, social issues important

enough and meaningful enough to address. Additionally, public administration assumes

that it actually has the ability to do something about such issues; there are workable

solutions to social issues. However, critics of this aspiration have argued against the idea

of workable policy solutions to social issues (McSwite, 2002). The political attributes of

public policy, policy problem recognition, and public administration are responsible for

such critiques. Likewise, scholars of public administration have faced this dilemma. For

example, participants of the second Minnowbrook conference left the conference not sure of much more about public administration and public policy than the fact that attempting to solve one set of public problems often creates other connected problems. These "conferees left Minnowbrook in 1988 with a sense of incompleteness" (Bailey, 1989 in Frederickson and Mayer, 1989, p. 224; and in Bailey and Mayer, 1992, p.8). This interconnectivity between initial problem recognition and subsequent problem recognition occurring within the wake of previous public efforts also plays itself out in the ebb and flow of changing target populations, interest groups, and constituencies.

With the relativity of and continuous changes in public issues, existential theory applied to public administration provides a way for viewing and understanding public administrative efforts in these conditions. An existential theory of experiencing and practicing public administration addresses the importance of consequentiality as the effects of decisions and actions in a particular environment or moment in turn affect/frame future problem recognition and decision making environments or moments. The existentialists' theme and importance of *choice* provides a good avenue for addressing consequentiality.

Choice is unavoidable. A moment of choice occurs whether the individual is ready for it or not – intellectually, emotionally, or paradigmatically (Gill and Sherman, 1973). In public administration, Simon (1997) addresses the individual's condition of choice with his notions of bounded rationality and satisficing. Moments of choice force the individual to decide between alternatives and to understand/guess at potential consequences. Additionally, the decision maker apprehends that selecting one option renounces the selection of other choices (Gill and Sherman, 1973). Once an individual

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decides, his or her freedom to make subsequent decisions is bounded by previous choices. He or she must then work accordingly from within the consequential boundaries of his or her decision.

Rittel and Webber (1973) point out that every decision to solve a public problem is a "one-shot operation." This is a sobering statement for public administration. Every policy action is consequential. Each leaves "traces" which cannot be undone (Rittel and Webber, 1973).

The notions of chance and accident compound the problems of choice in consequentiality. Chance and accident demonstrate that no carefully and intelligently crafted program of action is a sure success. Existentialists, some public administration scholars, and some organization scholars have acknowledged that risk can never be eliminated (Perrow, 1999; and Gill and Sherman, 1973). Through their critique of traditional philosophy, one can credit existentialists' with pointing a spotlight on consequentiality's poignancy and import as a component of human experience (Gill and Sherman, 1973) – rivaling reason, strategy, and planning.

The significance of this consequentiality lies within existentialism's understanding of individuals and societies making decisions and implementing decisions in the absence of any grand narratives or telos. Existence is contingency. Existence is not necessity. Some people try "to overcome this contingency by inventing a necessary, causal being" or thing (Sartre, 1938, p. 188). In public administration, one can see this inventive necessity take place in public administration's commitment to such grand narratives as efficiency, accountability, and legitimacy.

Some would say that a philosophical view that does not recognize any purpose or meaning to existence does not lend itself well to a discipline and practice such as public administration. Public administration's commitments to governance and to such narratives as freedom, justice, and liberty seem to require a meaningful existence and a profound sense of individual and corporate purpose. After all, frequently cited reasons for individuals taking on careers in government are the desires to help make a difference in the world, to help better society, and to feel as though one has contributed something somehow (Partnership for Public Service, 2004; and McSwite, 2002).

Responding to some of the initial ideas of an existential theory of public administration, a high level federal bureaucrat asked what such a theory offered to discourage public administrators from jumping off bridges (Simeone, personal communication, 2005). This concern for free-falling bureaucrats comes from an initial reaction to the existential idea that there is no universally accepted, overarching purpose or meaning in the world and to the admittance that social issues are ongoing events that seem impervious to political or administrative attempts to solve them. It is only fitting to have such a reaction. Many existentialists have reacted this way. However, this is only one of four general reactions to an existential awareness.

An existential awareness potentially results in one or more kinds of responses. The following four types of responses are both most prevalent to existentialists and most relevant to this discussion: forfeiture, impotence, ambivalence, and action.

Forfeiture involves the possibility of an individual committing suicide – usually this is a figurative suicide: depression, withdrawing from one's previous activities or work, and/or losing one's ambitions. This is the bureaucrat jumping from the bridge.

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Existentialists acknowledge the rationale for this forfeiture, but they do not typically recommend suicide (Tolstoy, 1905; Sartre, 1938; and Camus, 1991).

Impotence involves staying in a stagnate place in which one cannot accomplish what one desires, in which one is painfully aware of one's mundane day-to-day routines, and/or in which one does nothing to alter one's predicament and/or disillusionment. Here we find Kafka's metamorphosed bug and grey bureaucrats. Also, Dostoyevsky's anonymous narrator from the underground writes, "I am a sick man. . . . However, I know nothing about my disease, and do not know what ails me. I don't consult a doctor for it, and never have, though I have a respect for medicine and doctors" (Dostoyevsky, 1992, p. 1).

Ambivalence involves becoming aware of one's existential predicament and trying to not think about it. Instead of giving in to the existential awareness, the individual proceeds with business as usual while trying to deal with the feelings and thoughts that pop into one's head. Characters in existential works of art frequently depict this reaction for some period of the piece (Camus, 1991; and Sartre, 1938). Lastly, there is action.

Action involves defying one's meaninglessness through metaphysical revolt (Camus, 1991) by acting on one's desires in the face of adversity or in the face of the imminent inability to manifest one's ambitions entirely. This is the bureaucrat defying his or her absurdity/predicament by persevering in the midst of bureaucratic red tape, an allegedly apathetic public, vocal special interests, and social issues most accurately weighed on cultural-historical scales. An existential theoretical understanding of public administration facilitates significance through action if one so chooses. Therefore, this

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theoretical approach does not discourage effort; it permits more effort. One does not have to throw oneself from a bridge as result of it; one could acknowledge the significant effects one can have in one's community and/or government by way of contextual action and perseverance.

1.2 The Research Question

Considering the potential importance and utility of an existential theory of public administration, there are great opportunities for productive research that contributes additional depth to the theory and practice of public administration and public policy. This dissertation seeks to make such a contribution. Since this work explores the murky, uncharted terrain of existential public administration, this dissertation asks, "Are there any existential characteristics within the experience and practice of public administration? If so, how can one conceptualize them theoretically within the study of public administration? Additionally, how do they play themselves out in the day-to-day and overall activities and experiences of public administrators?" By answering these questions, and related sub-questions that might arise during this study's grounded theory research, this dissertation will try to reveal theoretical possibilities within existentialism and public administration.

These are broad theoretical questions. Conventional research questions require more specification. However, this dissertation confronts themes that are by no means conventional. Accordingly, this dissertation's endeavors involve theory building. Its methodology involves grounded theory investigation into organizational and individual experiences of public policy and public administration. Therefore, its inductive theory

building approach warrants these broad, conceptual questions. Once a theoretical framework is constructed, future research in existential public administration can narrow future research questions.

1.3 The Purpose for this Research

Research within existential public administration is important for more reasons than just encouraging public personnel. An existential theory of public administration also addresses the significance of ever-changing public issues on public policy and public administration. With an existential awareness of consequentiality and policy issue evolution, this theoretical approach questions and critiques paradigmatic understandings of bureaucrats, government, and public administrative endeavors. As such, it also questions current ways of evaluating and discussing administrative action and efficiency. However, existential theory does not allow government to excuse contextually determined poor performance. In a world without universally accepted meanings and purposes, an existential theoretical approach to public administration could facilitate discourse amongst interested parties. Such an approach could facilitate relevant, significant contextual action within the discipline and experience of public administration.

An existential theoretical framework within public administration would facilitate a melding of theory and practice; without concrete universal structures and identifiable finish lines, how can one make public administration applicable or practicable? How does one exist within the system? An existential theoretical framework could contextualize the varying wickedness of public issues into an arena in which one could

make contextually determined progress. In doing so, progress is not some essential good used to legitimize public effort; it is a contextually determined end considering the nature of public administration and the voluntary nature of individuals' involvement in the exercise of public administration. This idea is similar to that of Sementelli's (2007) "distortions of progress" in which he counters the notion that progress is associated with a universal teleology and/or totalizing forces. Accordingly, public administrators do not progress from imperfect circumstances to perfect circumstances. Besides, the concept of perfection is neither obtainable nor conceivable (Berlin, 1979 and 2002; and Sementelli, 2007).

An existential theoretical framework would be similar to what McSwite (2002) is talking about when McSwite suggests the need for individuals, communities, states, etc., to create together a "new framework for finding meaning" (McSwite, 2002, p. 81). McSwite advocates the idea that such a framework should avoid set, definable categories of good and evil and should instead seek to provide a space in which ideas of good and evil can coexist as they inseparably and inevitably do within the wholeness of life. This framework could be an "antidote to the moralism of the dominant view" (McSwite, 2002, p. 81). However, an existential public administration theoretical framework is not technically concerned with "finding meaning." It acknowledges that most likely people participating within the system would author personal, cultural "meanings." A more important aspect of utility for an existential theoretical framework could be as a theoretical venue for facilitating contextual, deliberative discourse amongst participants. In doing so, participants would generate, modify, and/or eliminate discursively

determined public problems, resolutions, efforts, and evaluative standards of temporal success or failure.

Therefore, it becomes apparent how an existential awareness of experience and practice within the contexts of public administration would change what an administrator does. The use of an existential theoretical framework allows for discursive approaches to contextual public administrative efforts. Additionally, it could be used to ameliorate the multicultural differences and potential conflicts of competing belief systems. Also, with an understanding that there are no universal, identifiable finish lines for evaluating successful policy and administrative efforts (Rittel and Webber, 1973), since policy analysis is creative and political (Wildavsky, 1989), problem comparison (are things better or more tolerable now than previously?) (Wildavsky, 1989) versus conventional outcomes/outputs analysis could be an existential approach to policy and administrative analysis/evaluation.

Lastly, an existential theory of public administration moves scholars and practitioners away from the pursuit of unobtainable utopias. Accordingly, it encourages scholars and practitioners to shed the ideal of some sort of liberation from the systems in which they toil. There will always be problems; there will always be work to be done; there will always be some system in place in which people can choose to make sense of their predicaments, make decisions, and act accordingly. Therefore, public administrators live and work within multiple social and organizational structures and systems; it is up to them to choose to deal with it and how to act within them. A priority for this discussion within the context of public administration becomes figuring out how

one exists within the system: how does Sisyphus exist within the system (he and his boulder on the mountain)?

It is this "figuring out" that sparks something new within the experience and practice of public administration. Existential writers have been trying to figure out how one exists within the system for decades – for over a century in some cases. However, some of their solutions to the predicament fall prey to the taken for granted assumptions or liberation desires of those who they critique. One cannot inject meaning or liberation into some activity. Kaufman writes how in Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* "a tragic world view is redeemed by Nietzsche's *amor fati*" (Kaufman, 1956, p. 49). In Sisyphus there is no redemption because there is no downfall. His "punishment" by the gods is not a downfall. The "punishment" is allegorical of Sisyphus's involuntary placement within a system by way of simply existing. Camus could have just as easily changed the myth to having Sisyphus show up at the social services office every morning at 7 am and process twenty-five cases by 4 pm, all the while knowing that there will always be more than enough cases for him to file the next day. Instead, the ownership of one's participation within the system takes away the sting of the "punishment." Additionally, this is not some acquiescence of defeatism as some critics might argue. It is instead a daily revolt against the experienced absurdity of one's predicament. It is choosing to have significance and relevance in citizens' lives within the context of public administrative work that could otherwise seem futile and/or mundane.

1.4 An Outline for the Remainder of the Dissertation

In order to discover the potential for an existential theoretical framework within public administration, this dissertation will do the following. First, this dissertation presents a review of the literature concerning public administration and existential theory. This literature review both explains and defends the premise for applying existential philosophy to public administration. In the third chapter, this dissertation presents the study's methodology and information collection. In this section, this dissertation provides an in-depth discussion of grounded theory research and its use within this dissertation. Additionally, this section includes a description of the sample to be studied. In the fourth chapter, this dissertation presents the results of its grounded theory analysis. Then, Chapter Five lays out an existential theoretical framework for understanding and describing the experience and practice of public administrators. Also, in the same chapter, it discusses the implications and utility of the new framework. Lastly, chapter six provides the limitations of the research, the opportunities for future research, and some concluding thoughts regarding the dissertation and its contributions.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 An Existential Perspective towards Public Administration

Existentialism, with its supposed autonomous self-determining individual, has

been pushed aside by postmodernism's sensitivities to cultural-historical determination

and modernity's reliance on universal grand narratives – universals that existentialists

refuse exist. The existential self-determining individual has been cast out of public

administrative discourse in lieu of other theoretical lenses such as the "decentered self"

(Fox and Miller, 1995), the "ideographic individual" (Miller, 2002 and 2004a), the

administrator as conservator (Terry, 1995), the responsible administrator (Cooper, 1990),

the organization man (Whyte, 2002), and the administrative man (Simon, 1997).

Through these lenses, the existential individual is disempowered as a policy change

agent, no longer able to initiate any change in policy discourse. The existential

perspective involves too much individual-centric free will to be accepted as a perspective

within a pluralistic, cultural historically framed arena of public policy.

However, there is utility in existentialism as a means for viewing public

administration and public administrative discourse. Although writers popularly

associated with existentialism, the French existentialists, were not working within a

paradigm that sufficiently recognized the value and significance of cultural and historical

influences on individual character, faculties, and opportunities, aspects of their ideas can be preserved by way of a recontextualization of their ideas framed within an interpretive paradigm (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Additionally, there is evidence that existential writers considered such influences when they were writing. For example, Camus explicitly mentions the impact of social and moral considerations on the creation of boundaries within which individuals must try to reconcile themselves and their "uniqueness" (Camus, 1991). In fact, the cultural suggestion that there is some purpose or telos towards which individuals aim their thoughts and behaviors – a false suggestion that when realized leads to existential crises and fallout – is one that Camus (1991) appreciates.

Therefore, the aim of this literature review is to identify and defend the existential perspective as a useful perspective in public administration. So, this literature review first presents a brief introduction to existential thought. Next, it briefly describes the existential concepts of "futility" and "absurdity" within public administration endeavors. This is followed with a description of how the existential perspective finds significance within public administration. Lastly, Camus's (1991) interpretation of the myth of Sisyphus provides a metaphorical example for the utility of an existential perspective in the face of ongoing, ever-changing, public administration problems and efforts.

2.2 Existentialism

2.2.1 Introductory Statements Concerning Existentialism

Popularly, mainstream readers have seen existentialism as having emerged from the rubble of World War II. Existentialists felt jaded by the consequences of "human

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progress" and technological development. The destruction, violence, and murder seemed

to counter any idea of progress and any idea that there could be a universal, overarching

purpose – whether it is a god[1] or some sort of greatest good – to personal and public

existence. In such a "reality," without any overarching purpose or "truth," with only a

world of contingency and consequence (Sartre, 1938), what does the individual mean?

What is his or her condition and/or role?

The realization of one's lack of a telos, the realization of one's meaninglessness,

makes one's daily activities seem foreignly mechanical. As explained by Camus (1991),

> One day the 'why' arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged
> with amazement. . . . Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a
> mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of
> consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows . . .
> the gradual return into the chain or is it the definitive awakening
> [existential realization]? (Camus, 1991, p. 13).

This existential awakening/realization exemplifies the experience of the commencement

of the existential condition. Next, the existential condition causes the individual to

reconsider the significance and meaning of his or her actions and his or her life.

> At certain moments of lucidity, the mechanical aspect of their [people's]
> gestures, their meaningless pantomime makes silly everything that
> surrounds them. A man is talking on the telephone behind a glass
> partition; you cannot hear him, but you see his incomprehensible dumb
> show: you wonder why he is alive. This discomfort in the face of man's
> own inhumanity, this incalculable tumble before the image of what we are,
> this 'nausea' as a writer of today calls it, is also the *absurd* (Camus, 1991,
> p. 15, italics added).

These are examples of the experience of existentialism.

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[1] However, Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, Leon Chestov, Leo Tolstoy, and Søren Kierkegaard all had theological versions of existentialism.

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With regard to the epistemology involved in existentialism, an existential awareness leads the individual to question his or her socialized, cultural-historical understanding of reality, and knowledge itself. Camus writes,

> I don't know whether this world has a meaning that transcends it. But I know that I do not know that meaning and that it is impossible for me just now to know it. What can a meaning outside my condition mean to me? I can understand only in human terms. What I touch, what resists me – that is what I understand. And these two certainties – my appetite for the absolute and for unity and the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle – I also know that I cannot reconcile them. What other truth can I admit without lying, without bringing in a hope I lack and which means nothing within the limits of my condition? (Camus, 1991, p. 51).

As for the nature of the existential individual, Sartre (1946) suggests that the existence of a person comes before a person's essence. If a person exists, and there is no purpose to life or existence, the individual can determine his or her own essence, his or her own character (Sartre, 1946). This is Sartre against determinism. According to Sartre, if one just accepts his or her condition without acknowledging that he or she had a role to play in the forming of one's condition through the choices they made, it is an example of "bad faith." The individual always has a choice.

Sartre's *existence before essence* draws criticism from both the modernists and the postmodernists within public administration. Sartre's denial of a human nature, of god, and of any guiding meta-narrative counters capital T truth claims and rational, generalizable universalisms. Additionally, Sartre's self-determining, autonomous individual peeves pluralism and cultural-historical sensitivities.

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2.2.2 A Brief History of Existentialism

However, Camus and Sartre are by no means the only existentialists. Neither are they indicative of the existential movement in its entirety. Before the famous French existentialists, Camus, Sartre, and Marcel, there were other existential thinkers. Other existential thinkers include writers such as Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and Heidegger – Scandinavian/German existentialists (see table 1). Kierkegaard wrote during the 1800s. Jaspers and Heidegger were coming out of World War I when they began their most prominent existential work (Gill and Sherman, 1973).

Table 1: Prominent and Relevant Existential Thinkers

Precursors to Existentialism	German Existentialists	French Existentialist
Kierkegaard Dostoyevsky Tolstoy Nietzsche	Kafka (German speaking Jew born in Prague, Austria-Hungary) Heidegger Jaspers	Sartre Camus Merleau-Ponty Marcel de Beauvoir
1800s ⟶		1900s

(Kaufmann, 1956; Breisach, 1962; Gill and Sherman, 1973)

After Kierkegaard, most existentialists conceived their own philosophical enterprises by individually applying customized versions of Husserl's phenomenology (Gill and Sherman, 1973). Sartre actually called himself a phenomenologist until Marcel identified him as an existentialist. From then until his increasing turn towards Marxism, Sartre accepted the existential label (Gill and Sherman, 1973).

Noteworthy differences existed within the existential movement. Existentialists frequently sided with one or the other of the two famous precursors to existentialism. The obvious divide between Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism and Nietzsche's atheism is illustrative of the frequent and numerous divides amongst existentialist writers.

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Nevertheless, in good old hard-to-pin-down existential fashion, while Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus seem to descend from Nietzsche, Nietzsche displays noteworthy affinities to Kierkegaard (Gill and Sherman, 1973). Jaspers points out that, despite the historical impossibility of either having influenced the other, the two shared a "thorough-going and radical opposition to mere reason" (Jaspers, 1955, p. 25). This opposition resulted in the two changing the reality of Western thought through "a destruction of all authority, a radical disillusionment in an overconfident reason, and a dissolution of bonds" making anything seem possible (Jaspers, 1955, p. 23).

2.2.3 Identifying Existential Thought

As for identifying existentialism as a school of thinkers, or even as a philosophical concept, existentialism is difficult to pin down at best, and it is an abused term to the point of incoherence at worst. For example, in the midst of President Bush's War on Terror, politicians and news anchors carelessly toss around confusing uses of phrases such as "existential threats" and "existential proportions." Marcel writes, "hardly a day goes by without my being asked what existentialism is. (Usually it is a society lady who asks for this information, but tomorrow it may be my charwoman or the ticket-collector on the underground)" (Marcel, 1956, p. 91). Marcel himself apparently has difficulty in answering what is existentialism. He says that his answers tend to be evasive: "I should like to say, 'it is too difficult,' or 'it would take too long to explain;' but I realize that such answers are disappointing and should not be given too often" (Marcel, 1956, p. 91). So, instead of defining existentialism, he tries to shed some light on what seems to be to him the essence of existentialism.

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Others have similar problems defining existentialism. This is largely due to the idea that existentialism is not a definite, identifiable school. It is instead more of a movement with identifiable concerns, themes, and motifs (Gill and Sherman, 1973). "For what really unites the existentialists is not their individual philosophies but the nature of the problems that they set out to explore" (Gill and Sherman, 1973, p. 6).

Camus (1991) had observed this issue of identity years ago, when the movement was in full throttle. Camus pointed out that, with regard to existential thought, "from Jaspers to Heidegger, from Kierkegaard to Chestov, from the phenomenologists to Schedller, . . . a whole family of minds related by their nostalgia but opposed by their methods and aims, have persisted in blocking the royal road of reason" (Camus, 1991, p. 23). Much as Gill and Sherman suggest, Camus stated years before that similarities between existential thinkers were limited to wrestling with common themes. Meanwhile they all frequently employed different, and sometimes even opposing, interests, principles, and methodologies. "Whatever may be or have been their ambitions, all started out from that indescribable universe where contradiction, antinomy, anguish, or impotence reigns" (Camus, 1991, p. 23).

As if purposefully adding to the confusion, "most of the living 'existentialists' have repudiated this label, and a bewildered outsider might well conclude that the only thing they have in common is a marked aversion for each other" (Kaufmann, 1956, p. 11). Additionally, as a result of existentialism's repudiation of belief systems and traditional philosophy (Kaufmann, 1956), existential discourse and expression frequently takes place outside of conventional philosophical venues and spills into artistic, literary, and dramatic venues. Therefore, the confusion of isolating and identifying thinkers as

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existentialists becomes even more difficult as thinkers known more for literature, for example Rilke, Kafka, and Camus, are added to the fold (Kaufmann, 1956).

These vague or absent boundaries and principles of existentialism have resulted in confusion and misunderstandings of what existentialism was, is, or intended to be. Mainstream readers typically consider existentialism to emphasize the darker side of human life, to deny the existence of God and morality, and to suggest a desperate quietism since action in a meaningless world offers no solutions to identified problems (Sartre, 1947). Sartre humorously sums it up by writing that "someone recently told me of a lady who, when she let slip a vulgar word in a moment of irritation, excused herself by saying, 'I guess I'm becoming an existentialist'" (Sartre, 1947, p. 13).

2.2.4 Sociological Paradigms and Existentialism

In order to provide some organization to this dissertation's discussion of and reference to existential thought, it is useful to employ two of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological paradigms when identifying and categorizing the disparate brands of existential thought. The two paradigms are the interpretive paradigm and the radical humanist paradigm. Both paradigms incorporate a subjective, phenomenological ontology and epistemology. However, the two differ in their deontologies (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) (see figure 1). The radical humanist paradigm concerns itself with liberating individuals from oppressive systems and structures. The interpretive paradigm does not concern itself with such imperatives. It seeks to describe and communicate personal and corporate experience.

Figure 1: Burrell and Morgan's (1979) Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis

Sociological Paradigms		Nature of Reality/Truth		
		Objective		Subjective
Nature of Society	Regulation	*Functionalism*		*Interpretivism*
		Realism Positivism Déterminism Nomothetic	*Ontology Epistemology Human Nature Methodology*	Nominalism Anti-Positivism Voluntarism Ideographic
	Radical Change	*Radical Structuralism*		*Radical Humanism*

Before discussing each paradigm specifically, it is important to give attention to the way Burrell and Morgan use their paradigms and the way this dissertation uses Burrell and Morgan's paradigms. Burrell and Morgan define their use of paradigm as "a term intended to emphasize the commonality of perspective which binds the work of a group of theorists together in such a way that they can be usefully regarded as approaching social theory within the bounds of the same problematic. This definition does not imply complete unity of thought" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 23). Similarly, this dissertation uses Burrell and Morgan's paradigms as an organizing mechanism while understanding its shortcomings and possible critiques. (For example, this dissertation does not appreciate Burrell and Morgan's statement of the nature of society either being that of regulation and control or radical change.) This approach shares similarities with Deetz's (1996) concerns regarding Burrell and Morgan (1979). Deetz writes, "The dimensions can be used as a way of focusing attention rather than as a means of classification, but few writings have done so. One purpose of this essay is to fight the

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tendency to reduce conceptions to categories or reduce sensitizing concepts to definitions" (Deetz, 1996, p. 191).

2.2.4.a A Radical Humanist Paradigm Interpretation of Existentialism

As mentioned previously, the interpretivist and radical humanist paradigms have certain similarities. However, interpretivists focus on understanding the process of individuals and communities creating the worlds in which they live. "The radical humanists subject it to critique, focusing upon what they regard as the essentially alienated state of man" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 279.)

Within the radical humanist point-of-view, ideological superstructures in which people interact dominate individuals' consciousnesses. Living beneath omnipotent ideological superstructures cognitively separates individuals from their "true" consciousnesses. This separation results from "the wedge of 'alienation' or 'false consciousness," which inhibits or prevents true human fulfillment" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 32). Therefore, individuals working within the radical humanist paradigm concern themselves with breaking down social constraints that hamper human potential. This paradigmatic point-of-view seeks to liberate individuals through revolutionary change.

Most likely as a result of their historical context and cultural developments, the French existentialists, who were writing after the Germans/Scandinavians, and who were coming out of World War II's occupied France, tend to line up within the radical humanist paradigm. Accordingly, they frequently advocate the resurrection of the true self or the authentic self from the reigning cultural paradigms of knowledge and morality

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that entomb them. This suggests that existentialists within the radical humanist paradigm struggle to liberate the individual from the absurdity and consequentiality of his or her existence.

2.2.4.b An Interpretive Paradigm Interpretation of Existentialism

While existentialists within the radical humanist paradigm, most frequently the French existentialists, resemble freedom fighters resisting the oppression of dominating philosophies, existentialists working within an interpretive paradigm present a different image of the individual interacting with the world. The interpretive paradigm involves individuals trying to observe on-going processes within an organization – or within society/the world – in order to understand individuals' behaviors and experiences (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Therefore, it emphasizes developing a subjective understanding of the socially-constructed world as it is experienced.

The Germanic/Scandinavian existentialists, writing before and coming out of World War I, tend to fall within the boundaries of the interpretive paradigm. They are interested in understanding the human condition of individuals wrestling with living in the social constructions of their cultural-historical contexts. For example, Kierkegaard was not interested in overthrowing the reigning religious and philosophical regimes as much as exposing their shortcomings and encouraging modifications to them. Similarly, Jaspers sought to critique the potentially dogmatic established schools of philosophy and replace them with the fluid activity of philosophizing.

Table 2: Two Quadrants of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) Sociological Paradigms as a Heuristic for Organizing Existential Thinkers

Interpretivist Subjective-Descriptive	Radical Humanist Subjective-Prescriptive
Kierkegaard Heidegger Jaspers Camus Merleau-Ponty	Nietzsche Sartre Marcel de Beauvoir

This divvying of existentialists between these two paradigms is by no means definitive and exclusive. This categorization is a means of simplifying and facilitating any discussion of existentialism, considering the school's diverse methods and aims (see table 2). For example, Camus, a member of the French existentialists, does not fit the radical humanist mold. Sure, he advocates revolt, but he advocates a metaphysical revolt. It is an ongoing revolt involving consciousness and philosophical awareness. It is not a revolt against social institutions. He is actually aware of and sympathetic to cultural and social influences and constraints on the individual. Meanwhile, Nietzsche, a German, who is frequently included in discussions of existentialism as an existential thinker, even though he and Kierkegaard both predated the term existentialism, puts great importance on the necessity of liberating the individual from domineering superstructures.

So, if one had to submit an answer to "what is existentialism," what would one say? Many authors talk about the "essence" of existentialism versus the "definition" of existentialism (Marcel, 1956; Kaufmann, 1956; and Gill and Sherman, 1973). Additionally, "the refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and remote from life

– that is the heart of existentialism" (Kaufmann, 1956, p. 12). This sort of description of existentialism facilitates an eventual, useful definition. Continuing along the thread of themes within existentialism, the following, slowly solidifying, ideas become definitive.

2.2.5 Defining Existentialism

Existentialism is not as much a traditional philosophy as it is a revolution against classical metaphysics. Existentialism consists of a series of battles against the attempts of classical metaphysics to envelope the individual within absolute, universal systems and to reduce personkind to a set of abstract, propositional terms (Gill and Sherman, 1973). This notion of revolt leads me to this dissertation's first "definition" of existentialism.

The central theme of existentialism is the theme of permanent revolution within individual experience. Existentialism is "a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity" (Camus, 1991, p. 54). It is an awareness and actualization of a metaphysical revolt that extends to the whole of experience. "It is not aspiration, for it is devoid of hope. That revolt is the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it" (Camus, 1991, p. 54).

Although Sartre's definition is equally revolutionary, he does not provide a definition of existentialism in such terms. He begins to define existentialism as a doctrine that declares that every truth and every action suggest a human context and human subjectivity (Sartre, 1947). Accordingly, existentialism means that existence precedes essence; subjectivity is the starting point (Sartre, 1947). There is no human nature. There is nothing that causes a person. Therefore, existentialism moves to make each individual aware of this and to make the individual fully responsible for his or her

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existence. As pointed out previously, this type of outlook on the part of Sartre sets the stage for both modernity's and postmodernity's critiques of existentialism.

To be fair to Sartre, he is not the only existential thinker working within aspects of a modernism while trying to battle with classical metaphysics. Existentialists seemingly carelessly throw around terms like "authentic," "fundamental," "essential," "ultimate," and "true." Most existential writers, including Camus, although this dissertation identifies a pre-postmodern awareness on his part of cultural-historical persuasions, hint at or plainly state universalisms – essentialisms – that are clearly inappropriate within a postmodern awareness and uncalled for within an existential awareness.

Apparently, the existential writers were not quite as rebellious against, and/or removed from, traditional philosophies as they thought they were. An avoidance of such essential, universal language would actually be more existential in experience and philosophy. Accordingly, adopting an anti-essential perspective to existentialism increases the essence of existentialism. Therefore, this dissertation intends to borrow particular philosophical ideas from the radical humanist existentialists while relying on the anti-essentialism of the existentialists within the interpretive paradigm. This will involve referencing authors within both paradigmatic camps concerning anti-teleological epistemologies and anti-generalizable universalisms. However, in doing so, this dissertation avoids the imperative theme of liberation espoused by the radical humanist existentialists.

Synthesizing ideas from both of the existentialists' paradigmatic groups, this dissertation relies on a version of Camus's definition of existentialism. This dissertation

defines existential thought and study as a philosophical critique of dominating paradigms resulting from, and taking place within, the wrestling of experience and activity in a non-rational and non-teleological world. Accordingly, by blending this conceptualization of existentialism with points of view by Kierkegaard and Jaspers discussed previously, existentialism as a repudiation of allegiance to any school of thought leaves the individual free to roam amongst various schools of thought.

2.3 The Legitimacy of Existential Perspectives within Public Administration

The existential self-determining individual of modernity is not entirely undone by postmodernism and its proponents. Nor is the existential hegemonic-narrative-repudiating individual vanquished by modernity and its proponents. In fact, it is through a changing understanding of context, history, culture, and pluralistic narratives that the existential individual exists. Such an individual lives within systems of indeterminate determinism in which the accidents and randomness of meaningless cultural, historical, and even biological development and succession have produced an individual whose options of choice are framed by cultural, historical, and biological boundaries. That being so, the existential individual still holds the power to choose his or her direction from within the confines of his or her culturally, historically crafted place in the world. As mentioned previously in this dissertation, Camus was aware of such boundaries on the individual's constitution and the individual's experience of the world. The cultural suggestion that there is some purpose or telos to which individuals aim their behaviors and outlooks is an influence that Camus appreciates.

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> To the extent to which he [the individual] imagined a purpose to his life, he adapted himself to the demands of a purpose to be achieved and became the slave of his liberty. Thus I could not act otherwise than as the father (or the engineer or the leader of a nation, or the post office sub-clerk) that I am preparing to be. I think I can choose to be that rather than something else. I think so unconsciously, to be sure. But at the same time I strengthen my postulate with the beliefs of those around me, with the presumptions of my human environment. However far one may remain from a presumption, moral or social, one is partly influenced by them and even, for the best among them, one adapts one's life to them. Thus, the absurd man realizes that he was not really free. To speak clearly, to the extent to which I hope, to which I worry about a truth that might be individual to me, about a way of being or creating, to the extent to which I arrange my life and prove thereby that I accept its having meaning, I create for myself barriers between which I confine my life. I do like so many bureaucrats of the mind and heart who only fill me with disgust and whose only vice, I now see clearly, is to take man's freedom seriously (Camus, 1991, p. 58).

This passage expresses an awareness of the cultural and historical influences on individual character and freedom.

The influence of culture, history, and espoused truth claims do not destroy the possibility of the existential individual. The French existential writers were writing within their modern, radical humanist paradigm. However, in our interpretivist, postmodern world, meaninglessness still exists – the only thing that changes is the degree of individual determinism brought to picture by context and contingency. Camus appears to have been writing from such a perspective, while Sartre may appear to be seen as ignoring this paradigmatic perspective. In so doing, however, Sartre's rejection of "deterministic excuses" does not have to put him at odds with postmodernity's contextualism and pluralism. Sartre suggests that the defining aspect of existentialism is that a person exists with no overarching purpose or end in the universe to determine or influence that person's character, goals, and decisions. Therefore, the person can

determine his or her own "essence" (Sartre, 1946). If what Sartre means by this is the notion of a blank slate, then one could expect many to believe he is wrong. He is correct in realizing that there is no universal, teleological end determining our choices. However, he does not seem aware of the mistake he makes when he denies culture, history, and, perhaps, genetics their due. Therefore, just like the indeterminance of Miller's (2004a) socially constructed decentered self, an updated Sartrean individual, framed within an interpretive paradigm, can act within the dimensions of his or her socially constructed boundaries, free from the determining tyranny of purpose.

2.4 Futility, Absurdity, and Significance

Critics of public administration criticize the discipline for its involvement with the mundane (McSwite, 2002). With critics suggesting that public administrative effort is fruitless and mundane, the critics' perspective sees such effort as absurd. Existentialism sympathizes with these evaluations of absurdity. Camus writes, "if I see a man armed only with a sword attack a group of machine guns, I shall consider his act to be absurd. But it is so solely by virtue of the disproportion between his intention and the reality he will encounter, of the contradiction I notice between his true strength and the aim he has in view" (Camus, 1991, p. 29). For a public administrator considering such an idea, in the face of daunting social and governmental problems, a sort of administrative existential crisis could occur.

Pushing the administrative boulder up the socio-political mountain never accomplishes anything as the rock always seems to roll back down to the bottom of the mountain. Nevertheless, by walking back down the mountain, repositioning itself behind

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the boulder, and beginning to push again, public administration defies its ridiculousness. By owning the on-going process of its work, by making the apparently mundane remarkable, public administration defies its absurdity. It is most likely that one of the main objectives of public administration is not to wipe out the "group of machine guns" with only a sword, handed to them by political, social, and cognitive constraints. Instead, it could be facing social issues as an ongoing struggle, not as an enemy that can actually be vanquished.

The world is not absurd. The absurd is present within personkind's relationship to the world. The world is neutral, indifferent. People, meanwhile, seek order and meaning, and they cannot find it. This is the absurd (Camus, 1991). Tellingly, public policy and public administration are attempts to find or create order and meaning in an indifferent world. Therefore, policy and administrative effort can be seen as absurd. Additionally, public policy and public administration target public issues. Public issues are contextual, ever-changing, socially constructed issues. So, it seems that existentialism can provide a theoretical framework for viewing/creating significant action in the face of a seemingly futile struggle against ever changing social problems.

2.5 Theoretical Links and Arguments: Existential Public Administration for Relevance and Significance through Contextual Action and Perseverance

2.5.1 Linking Existential Action and Public Administrative Efforts

In response to his rebellious ways, the gods punished Sisyphus with fruitless toil -- the worst punishment the gods, based on their understanding of humanity, could choose. The gods condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of a mountain, which

would then roll back down the mountain of its own accord. This seemingly repetitive exercise of futility, as mentioned previously in this dissertation, can be likened to the activity of public administrative. "Every solution leads to a new problem. Modern managers experience this every day as they cope with the flux confronting them" (Morgan, 1997, p. 289).

Rittel and Webber (1973) present similar ideas in their concept of social issues as wicked problems. Any activity aimed at solving a wicked problem will produce subsequent waves of consequences over an extended, and possibly unlimited, period of time. The authors point out how public administrators need to be cognizant of the waves of repercussions that reverberate through systemic networks and to value the consequences of such repercussions. "Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem" (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p. 165).

To complicate public work even more, Rittel and Webber refer to how public administrators started asking if the things they do are the "right things" to do. The classical paradigm of science, the rationality project, is not applicable to the problems of open societal systems. "The problems of governmental planning – and especially those of social or policy planning – are ill-defined, and they rely upon elusive political judgment for resolution. (Not 'solution.' Social problems are never solved. At best they are only re-solved – over and over again.)" (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p. 160). This brings the authors to define social issues as wicked problems.

Wicked problems do not possess clarifying traits such as clear missions and clear finish lines. Problems of that nature are "tame" or "benign" problems. Those are the problems of mathematicians and chess players. Public Administrators face elusive,

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interconnected, constantly evolving wicked problems – wicked as in malignant, tricky, circular, and/or aggressive.

However, public administrators and scholars need not be disheartened by the futility, ambiguity, and consequentiality of their situation. By owning the on-going process of its work, by making the apparently mundane remarkable, public administration and public policy defies its absurdity. Existential action allows for significant action in the face of a seemingly futile struggle against ever changing social problems.

According to Camus, Sisyphus defeated his punishers by owning his toil of continuously pushing his boulder up his hill, only to have to do it all over and over again. "I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain. One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well" (Camus, 1991, p. 123). Public administration does not involve pointless, fruitless labor – although many in public administration may feel this way at certain times. This labor is the heart of what public administration does. "His rock is his thing. ...The Rock is still rolling" (Camus, 1991, p. 123). Public administration and policy discourse, and its attendant existential action, are commitments to work, to continuing to push the boulder up the hill, that public administrators know will never end. Without this absurd awareness, public administration's work would be fruitless, unrewarding. Instead, "the struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (Camus, 1991, p. 123). McSwite seems to agree. McSwite states that

> Public service presents the absurdity of the human condition, and demands at the same time that it be accepted and dealt with – effectively. The payoff for meeting this challenge is a meaningful life, a sense that you have learned something, and that you are better off in heart and soul at the end than you were in the beginning.

These are personal benefits, the ones that accrue directly to people who achieve the sense of life I am describing (McSwite, 2002, p. 97).

Sisyphus exemplifies the socio-historical context putting us into spots where we have limited choice. In the case of Sisyphus, his set of choices was limited to selecting a cognitive outlook and understanding. He chose one of significant existential action, by way of exercising metaphysical revolt. He was forced to toil fruitlessly, but he made the decision to own that work and to accept it as his own. This is not "bad faith" as some might argue Sartre would say. "Bad faith" would be passively experiencing the punishment of work that was not his own and which resulted in nothing but fruitless effort. Camus's response to this is that by owning one's toil, by making it one's "thing," what one does, the individual defies the gods, defies the absurdity, and experiences significance. Camus's absurd hero is an example of an individual existentially participating within metaphysical revolt.

2.5.2 The Role of Liberation

This dissertation would like to take a moment to clarify its use of this metaphor. With the Sisyphus reference, this dissertation does not intend to promote the idea of emancipation through the existential denial of one's absurdity. The cultural value and ought of emancipation is contrary to existential thought. Additionally, advocating emancipatory action is an appeal to the modern grand narrative of "the emancipation of the rational or working subject" (Lyotard, 1979, p. xxiii). Any existentialist suggesting a liberation from the absurdity of one's human condition is guilty of injecting meaning and *a priori* essential ideas into his or her existential predicament. For numerous

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existentialists, this has been a philosophical stumbling block that they, for some probably cultural reason, could not avoid. Camus (1991) acknowledged a need to specify a discontinuity between his discussion of metaphysical revolt and the idea of liberation/emancipation as some teleological end. His revolt "is not aspiration, for it is devoid of hope. That revolt is the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it" (Camus, 1991, p. 54).

When presented with the Sisyphus metaphor, one could ask, "Well, how significant of a victory does Sisyphus have here? He's still under the gods. He's still pushing the rock. He's still within 'the hierarchy' so to speak" (Miller, qualifying paper defense conversation, 2006 – quotation marks do not indicate the exact phrase of Miller; they simply identify that the questions come from an outside source). This is exactly the point. If Sisyphus was not still trapped within "the hierarchy," if Sisyphus had managed to escape the punishment and authority of the gods, if Sisyphus had successfully liberated himself, existentialism would have no merit or worth. Emancipation would be the telos towards which human effort could be justified, made meaningful.

In the context of public administration, the public is an omnipresent boulder against public administration's shoulders. There is no emancipation from it. Public administration is toil. There is no end to the wicked problems of public work. There is no final accomplishment. [If there was a final accomplishment, public administrators would be done by now, or, public administrators serve themselves well by dragging their administrative feet so as to not "accomplish" themselves out of their jobs.]

At most, by using the Sisyphus metaphor, critics can accuse this dissertation of accepting a notion of what Alvesson and Willmott (1992) call "microemancipation."

However, doing so helps to express part of the existential revolt at play within this metaphor. Microemancipation differs markedly from a traditional idea of emancipation. Where as orthodox Marxist emancipation involves the transformation of consciousness from "false" to "true," thereby liberating the individual from oppression to self-actualization, microemancipation involves a precarious, ongoing endeavor (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, p. 446). Those engaged in microemancipation continuously rebel in order to both create opportunities for critical reflection and to counteract the cultural-historical effects of traditions, prejudices, and so on (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, p. 446). Such struggle "portrays the emancipatory idea not as one large, tightly integrated project, but rather as a group of projects, each limited in terms of space, time, and success" (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, p. 446). The opportunities for critical reflection of which Alvesson and Willmott speak show up in Camus's (1991) interpretation of Sisyphus contemplating himself and his situation as he walks back down the mountain in order to retrieve his rock. He is never free from his godly oppressors, but he continuously rebels.

2.5.3 The Contextual Decision for Action

The legitimacy of seeking to apply existential philosophy to public administration to see if one can discover an existential theoretical framework of public administration makes theoretical sense. Public administrators share experiences similar to those of Sisyphus. Everyday public administration involves battles over politics, the complications of equity and efficiency, implementing potentially ambiguous policy in varying socio-economic contexts, and the individual experience of public service.

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Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, this sort of labor is the heart of what public administration does. In the absence of any grand meaning or purpose, with only a world of contingency and consequence, public administrators still have the opportunity for relevance and significance through contextual action and perseverance.

Existential thought, within the interpretive paradigm, does not require action. Considering the character of public administration's work and academic discipline, it makes contextual sense in this dissertation to follow a path of action that hopes to provide services and goods to a public that wants or needs them. Such wants and needs do not stem from any essential source. Ever changing political and social discourses continuously influence and change these wants and needs. Likewise, these wants and needs continuously influence and change the political and social discourses. Accordingly, action, in its present tense, combined with an awareness of past action and the potential future's consequences of initiated action, is a contextually appropriate means of confronting public administration's existential condition.

This decision to embrace action as public administration's thing, what it does, should not lead one to think that positivistic approaches like performance management and performance budgeting get to stand unopposed at the helm. Quite the contrary. Performance management and performance budgeting do not hold exclusive rights to the domain of public action. Their quantifiable truth claims as to what to address and how to address it are undone as anything other than political determinations representing whatever group of thinkers happened to win out in whichever discourses that happened to allow for the control of power and resources. Their "purpose" is a politic. An existential

awareness provides a theoretical platform that is conscious of politicalized/socialized creations of "necessary" things.

Therefore, in light of this theoretical discussion, this dissertation suggests two broad arguments. First, existential theory is able to understand and respond to public administrators' perceptions of relevance, purpose, and activity within the theory and practice of public administration. Secondly, public administrators' personal and organizational understandings of policy, administration, and experience illustrate theoretical concepts of existential theory.

Like the research questions stated previously in this dissertation, see section 1.3, these arguments appear vague. This is due to this dissertation's use of grounded theory to guide its research. As the dissertation's grounded theory analysis progresses, more and more discrete concepts will emerge from the information. At that time, more research questions will develop. More of this is discussed in the next section on methodology.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Information Collection

This chapter introduces and describes this dissertation's research methodology. It defines relevant concepts and terms so that the reader can understand, follow, and eventually evaluate the dissertation's research and discussion. To do so, this chapter is divided into five sections. First, it discusses the appropriateness of matching one's research methodology with one's research situation and questions. In the context of this dissertation, the first section explains why the qualitative approach of grounded theory is appropriate to this dissertation's endeavors. Having done so, this chapter moves on to the second section, in which it discusses the utility of using grounded theory for this dissertation. This section includes a brief history of grounded theory, a discussion of grounded theory's definitive characteristics and issues, and a review of the activities involved in conducting grounded theory research. The third section reconciles the conventional, arguably quantitatively inspired, understanding of triangulation with the language and practice of grounded theory. The relevance of information gathering through interviews, specifically semi-structured interviews, is discussed in the fourth section. Lastly, the fifth section concludes the chapter with a description of the sample and sampling methods used within this dissertation's research.

3.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research provides opportunities to research social phenomena in ways quantitative research sometimes cannot. Certainly, each method has its strengths and weaknesses depending on the nature and context of particular studies, but for the purpose of this dissertation, qualitative methods, grounded theory specifically, provide the best means to address the dissertation's research area of interest. Qualitative research seeks to make sense of phenomena and personal experiences in terms of the meanings that people apply to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994a). Accordingly, grounded theory – a qualitative research methodology for generating theory that emerges from the analysis of empirical data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2005) – utilizes several tools for collecting and analyzing information. These tools include interviews, observations, case studies, personal experiences, coding, and writing. By way of the grounded theory method, these tools help generate empirically grounded theories for understanding and explaining phenomena. Qualitative research in general helps to explain the "routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994a, p. 2).

One can illustrate the nature of qualitative research by comparing the notions of *quality* within qualitative research and *quantity* within quantitative research. Dabbs (1982) points out that *quality* refers to the nature of things. It addresses the what, how, when, and where of things. As such, qualitative research deals with "the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things" (Berg, 2001, p. 3.). Meanwhile, *quantity* refers to the amounts of things. It addresses the counts and measures of things (Dabbs, 1982). Therefore, it is evident that qualitative

research is sometimes more useful for the sort of questions raised by social scientists. They look for answers to questions that stress how people, societies, cultures, etc., create social experiences and how they give meaning to them. In contrast, quantitative research emphasizes the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, rather than the processes involved (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994a, p. 4).

One's research area of interest and research questions then help determine which methodological approach one chooses for conducting his or her research. Quantitative research intends to provide causal determination, prediction and generalization. Qualitative research focuses on understanding and explaining. Research that seeks to understand and to explain the meaning and/or nature of people's experiences with problems and/or situations lends itself well to discovering what people are thinking and doing out in the field (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Additionally, those who wish to generate empirically grounded theory rather than verify logico-deductive theory benefit from a qualitative research approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Locke, 2001).

3.2 Grounded Theory

3.2.1 An Introduction to Grounded Theory Research

This dissertation's research addresses the potential theoretical significance of existentialism within the study and practice of public administration. Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing new theory from systematically gathered and analyzed information (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Therefore, the use of grounded theory to explore, to develop, and to

articulate a new theoretical framework for public administration fits particularly well

with this dissertation's intentions. Grounded theory employs procedures that include "the

systematic asking of generative and concept-relating questions, theoretical sampling,

systematic coding procedures, suggested guidelines for attaining conceptual (not merely

descriptive) 'density,' variation, and conceptualization" (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p.

275). The theoretical product that emerges from the grounded theory approach is

substantive theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1983/1994; Strauss and Corbin,

1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2000; Locke, 2001), which can potentially

become formal theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; and Glaser, 1992; Strauss

and Corbin, 1998). As such, this dissertation's research uses grounded theory in order to

develop an existential theoretical framework for viewing and understanding public

administration.

Before moving into the complexities of grounded theory, the remainder of this

introduction seeks to provide a general conceptual understanding of this methodology

and the intellectual and practical contexts in which it takes place. It does so in order to

help the reader understand and follow the discussion of this, at times, lesser known

methodology within qualitative research. The next few paragraphs touch on the essence

of grounded theory research by addressing what it is, what it does, and how it is useful.

Afterward, a more in-depth review of grounded theory methodology follows.

As suggested earlier, the grounded theory methodology is essentially "a set of

flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to

build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and

conceptual development" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 507). Grounded theory differs from more

traditional logico-deductive approaches to research and theory by way of a greater emphasis on the induction of theory from data; less of an emphasis, if any, on hypothesis testing; and a lack of necessity for pre-existing theory (Charmaz, 1990/1994; Locke, 2001). The most traditional approach to grounded theory blends both quantitative and symbolic interactionist epistemologies (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Dey, 1999). As such, grounded theorists are able to construct hypotheses and concepts, grounded in empirical data, that "fit" the information in the situation being researched and that "work" by way of meaningful relevance and explanation to those involved (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

By generating new theories that "fit" and "work" in contextually appropriate environments, grounded theory is relevant and useful to both academic and nonacademic audiences (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), this is due to the idea that the comparative analysis within grounded theory research results in two basic types of theory. Most often, grounded theory produces substantive theory. This is theory that is developed for a specific, empirical area of interest and inquiry. By expanding one's comparison groups to cover multiple substantive areas, one can seek to continue to develop one's grounded theory into a grounded formal theory that covers a conceptual area of interest and inquiry. Both of these types of theory are what Merton (1968) refers to as middle range theories. Middle range theories are above situation-specific microtheories, or day-to-day working hypotheses, but they are below all-inclusive grand theories.

The usefulness of these middle range theories lies within their "potential to address the theory-practice gap" (Lasiuk and Ferguson, 2005, p. 134) that allegedly occurs within the field of public administration. This has clear theoretical appeal to

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practical public administration. It provides a realistic method for facilitating the "praxis" that so many public administration scholars discuss.

The remainder of this section goes on to address the ins-and-outs of grounded theory. First, this section provides a brief history of grounded theory's development since 1967. It then moves into defining what grounded theory is. This attempt at defining grounded theory brings to attention the competing paradigms that have developed within the grounded theory methodology. From there, this section covers the topics of theory and theorizing, the sources of information available to grounded theorists, the activity of coding one's data, and the process of grounded theory analysis.

3.2.2 A Brief History of Grounded Theory

Ever since Glaser and Strauss first published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967, there has been a crack, if not a split, in the family tree of grounded theory. This arguably resulted from the divergent epistemologies of Glaser and Strauss. Even Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe their coming together as "ironic." However, it is entirely possible that the authors' differences in methodological backgrounds facilitated the applicability and usefulness that grounded theory research enjoys.

The well rounded methodological underpinnings of grounded theory arguably stem from the authors' institutional heritages. Several grounded theory authors, including Glaser and Strauss, make note of Glaser coming from the highly positivistic Department of Sociology at Columbia University, while Strauss hailed from the qualitative stronghold of the "Chicago School" at the University of Chicago (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2005; O'Conner et al., 2008).

Accordingly, Glaser implanted positivistic, quantitative sensibilities within his and Strauss's grounded theory. Strauss brought with him the symbolic interactionism (Dey, 1999; Charmaz, 2005) and pragmatism (Charmaz, 2005) of the Chicago School.

Some of the potential fissures began to reveal themselves in the years after the authors published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. In Glaser's 1978 *Theoretical Sensitivity*, Glaser began to suggest that his and Strauss's work had glossed over, or neglected, important procedures for theoretically rendering discovered substantive concepts (Glaser, 1978). The previous book lacked procedures and guidelines for establishing the theoretical sensitivity one needs to discover and to create one's grounded theoretical product. Additionally, Glaser began to allow more of his positivist, quantitative roots to show as his discussion of revised methods furthered the idea of objectivity and an external reality that shows itself through data.

As years passed, Glaser and Strauss were working independently and continuing to develop their ideas of grounded theory. Just as Glaser was allowing his background to influence his grounded theory approach, Strauss was doing similarly. Strauss's 1987 *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* contains, among other things, two obvious diverging ideas from Glaser. Firstly, Strauss was beginning to peal back some of the detached, objective observer ideas of Glaser and Strauss. He was beginning to suggest an interactive subjectivity at play within the data collection and interpretation of grounded theory research. Additionally, he was calling to question Glaser's tabula rasa ideas toward the acceptability of extant theory while performing grounded research. As Glaser moved towards greater concern for not allowing previous theoretical literature to affect one's grounded theory research, Strauss was moving towards greater involvement of

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extant theories informing one's grounded research as long as such theories were grounded extant theories themselves.

As illustrated by Glaser's (1992) ardent and fervent condemnation of their work, Strauss and Corbin's (1990, 1994 and 1998) developments within grounded theory finalized the split between both Glaser and Strauss and between what some would call "classical grounded theory designs" and more interpretive grounded theory designs (O'Conner et al., 2008). Strauss and Corbin offer grounded theorists several aspects of grounded theory previously missing within the methodology. Strauss and Corbin permit greater use of extant theory to inform one's grounded theory research. Also, Strauss and Corbin take into consideration the role of interpretation on the part of researchers as they analyze their data. Lastly, Strauss and Corbin put forth new coding and analysis procedures with new scientistic terminologies to try to facilitate the real world efforts of grounded theorists.

Although handbook styled, codified analytical procedures would seem to be agreeable to Glaser's objective, quantitative hankerings, Glaser actually attacked Strauss and Corbin on two fronts for proposing such things. Firstly, such rigid rules for coding and analysis inhibited the emergence of categories, concepts, and theories, and they forced whatever "emerged" into categories that were overly influenced by the tools of analysis rather than by analysis grounded in the data themselves. Secondly, to Glaser, the procedures Strauss and Corbin promoted were no longer grounded theory analysis. They were a new methodology for performing qualitative data analysis (Glaser, 1992).

Up until this point, Glaser and Strauss, and Strauss and Corbin, have been of primary interest to those surveying the field of grounded theory. Obviously, there have

been several scholars working within grounded theory since the mid to late 1970s. However, based on the works cited by prominent authors within the field, and within qualitative research in general (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2000 and 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000 and 2005), it is fairly easy to identify some primary contributors to the field of grounded theory since the 1980s. Locke, Clarke, and Charmaz account for a majority of significant work within recent and current grounded theory research. Additionally, their work is exceedingly relevant and applicable to this dissertation's research. Therefore, the remainder of this brief history of grounded theory will look at the roles and contributions of Locke, Clarke, and Charmaz.

These three authors represent a strong interpretive, postmodern turn in grounded theory methodology. Since a lot of these three authors' works have overlapped chronologically since the 1980s up to present day 2008, this history does not try to address them chronologically. Instead, the authors are presented in a way that draws attention to their particular contributions to grounded theory research. Locke (2001) pragmatically and epistemologically moves her approach to grounded theory away from the classical approach. Meanwhile, Clarke (2005) presents a radical change from the classical grounded theory approach. Lastly, Charmaz (1983, 1990, 2000, and 2005) presents an approach to grounded theory that both separates itself from what classical grounded theory has become while taking back some of the techniques of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) and Glaser's (1978) original grounded theory methodology. She does so by way of her constructionist approach to grounded theory.

Locke provides an example of how grounded theory has broken out of its sociology and nursing research roots and how it has found its way into a multiplicity of

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disciplines. Locke's (2001) work in organizational and management studies provides examples for taking advantage of grounded theory research within administrative environments. Additionally, she focuses on the qualitative aspects of grounded theory – more so than the quantitative influences of Glaser.

Locke's (2001) work addresses the differences and developments that have emerged within grounded theory. Then, she moves on to discuss how these developments have actually strengthened the theoretical and practicable products of grounded theory research. Her primary argument is for the way that grounded theory's "peculiar mix of subjectivity, interpretivism, and science" (Locke, 2001, p. 130) resonates well with organizational and managerial research. It does so because this odd mix has allowed members of rather varying methodological paradigms to work within grounded theory methodologies. Grounded theory research helps bridge the divide between logico-deductive quantitative research and inductive qualitative research.

Clarke (2005) is less obliged to merge the usefulness of quantitative methodologies, classical grounded theory methodologies, and emerging interpretive grounded theory methodologies. Clarke acknowledges and supports the constructivist grounded theory of Charmaz. She also appreciates how Strauss (1987) was beginning to be come a bit more constructivistic. However, while doing so, she still complains about the "problematic positivist recalcitrancies that remain" within grounded theory (Clarke, 2005, p. xxi). Her efforts to push grounded theory further around the postmodern turn include a "postmodernization of grounded theory in symbolic interactionism and Foucaultian analytics" (Clarke, 2005, p. xxxvii). Clarke sees grounded theory as

legitimately consisting of packages of tools. As such, her product, situational analysis, is a package within grounded theory's packages of tools.

Just as some other contemporary grounded theorists do, Clarke does not simply advocate for an involved, interactionist grounded researcher. She resists any idea that grounded researchers are anything else. There is no such thing as the detached, objective grounded researcher. Clarke (2005) uses this constructivist, postmodern point of view to argue for the necessity of grounded theory, at least hers, to take up causes of social justice, whether it be aimed against such social ills as sexism, racism, and classicism or whether it be concerned with access to healthcare, inequalities of wealth, and service provision for the disabled. For Clarke, grounded theory is not just a method for generating theory. It is also a method for inspiring and creating social action.

Charmaz holds a similar zeal for using grounded theory to advance issues of social justice (Charmaz, 1980, 1990/1994, and 2005). However, she claims to approach grounded theory in a way that "celebrates first hand knowledge of empirical worlds, takes a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism, and offers accessible methods for taking qualitative research into the 21st century" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510). Where as Clarke uses her recontextualization/postmodernization of grounded theory to create a new package of tools within grounded theory, Charmaz is more inclined to keep to the more conventional procedures of grounded theory methodology. Despite her Straussian interpretivism, which leads her to constructivism, she seems to prefer the flexible, utilitarian coding procedures of Glaser over the more specified coding methods of Strauss and Corbin (1998) (Charmaz, 1983/1994, 1991, and 2005; Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001).

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Lastly, in the midst of her constructivism (Charmaz, 1980, 1983/1994, 1990/1994, 1991, 1995, 2000, 2003, and 2005) and her advocacy for grounded theory as a means of pursuing social justice (Charmaz, 2000 and 2005), Charmaz also reminds her readers of the vein of pragmatism that has always run within the body of grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2000 and 2005). She suggests that "Strauss's versions of grounded theory emphasized meaning, action, and process, consistent with his intellectual roots in pragmatism and symbolic interactionism" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 509). As such, to conclude, Charmaz's approach to grounded theory is "a constructivist grounded theory [that] adopts grounded theory guidelines as tools but does not subscribe to the objectivist, positivist assumptions in its earlier formulations. A constructivist approach emphasizes the studied phenomenon rather than the methods of studying it" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 509).

Having covered these prominent grounded theory writers, and having touched on some of the similarities and differences within the field of grounded theory, it is evident that although there are disagreements within the grounded theory community, there are at least some general agreements as to what the methodology is. In the midst of each author's revisions to grounded theory, no one is entirely throwing out the basic principles of grounded theory research. Current mainstream grounded theorists would probably agree with Locke (2001, p. 30) as she declares that the particular combinations of the various contributors' intellectual backgrounds have facilitated a general grounded theoretical approach to data collection, analysis, and theory generation that has introduced a set of systematic procedures to the field. These practices and procedures have "enabled researchers to develop empirically grounded theories of everyday action in context" (Locke, 2001, p. 30).

With this workable, generalized understanding of grounded theory, this discussion

moves on to the next section where it provides actual definitions of grounded theory

research. The differences amongst the contributors to grounded theory do not manifest

themselves in the defining of the field as much as in identifying "appropriate" research

activities within the field. Therefore, this dissertation now presents a more in-depth

definition of grounded theory. As it does so, some differences will arise. However, after

defining grounded theory, this discussion will venture into the competing paradigms

within grounded theory. Doing so will permit the discussion to continue into greater

understandings of theory and theorizing, coding, analyzing, and evaluating grounded

theory work.

3.2.3 Defining Grounded Theory

When discussing grounded theory, it is obviously helpful to point out what one

means by the term grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 2) state that grounded

theory is the discovery of theory from data that are systematically obtained and analyzed

from social research. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory is theory

that is derived from data that has been systematically collected and analyzed through the

research process. More recently, Charmaz (2003 and 2005) has defined grounded theory

as a set of flexible analytic guidelines/strategies for data collection and analysis that

enable researchers to inductively build middle-range theories by way of successive levels

of data analysis and conceptual development.

As evident within the three definitions provided above, when one tries to define

grounded theory, one frequently ends up recognizing definitions aimed at the method and

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definitions aimed at the product. "The term 'grounded theory' refers both to a method of inquiry and to the product of inquiry. However, researchers commonly use the term to mean a specific mode of analysis" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 507). Therefore, before moving into various definitive aspects of grounded theory research, the following definitions, parceled out by method versus product, might be useful. First, here are some definitions of grounded theory as method:

- Grounded theory is the "the discovery of theory from data – systematically obtained and analyzed in social research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 1).

- Grounded theory is "an inductive approach usually used with participant observation and interview data. . . The grounded theory method then, uses comparison as an analytic tool to generate concepts and hypotheses and to interrelate them through core variables which are both parsimonious and broad in scope" (Mullen and Reynolds, 1978/1994, pp. 127 and 129).

- "The grounded theory method stresses discovery and theory development rather than logical deductive reasoning which relies on prior theoretical frameworks" (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 96).

- "The grounded theory approach is a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area" (Glaser, 1992, p. 16).

- Grounded theory "is a primarily inductive approach to theory development in which emerging hypotheses are tested deductively and subsequent theory and data collection are modified until the optimal fit between data and theory has been obtained" (Morse and Field, 1995, p. 242).

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- "Grounded theory methods consist of flexible strategies for focusing and expediting qualitative data collection and analysis. These methods provide a set of inductive steps that successively lead the researcher from studying concrete realities to rendering a conceptual understanding of them" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 311).

Second, here are some definitions of grounded theory as product:

- Grounded theory is theory discovered "from data systematically obtained from social research. . . . Grounded theory is derived from data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of data" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, pp. 2 and 5).

- Grounded theory is substantive theory that "is grounded in research on one particular substantive area. . . . A theory at such a conceptual level, however, may have important general implications and relevance, and become almost automatically a springboard or stepping stone to the development of grounded formal theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.79).

- Grounded theory is "complex, conceptually woven, integrated theory; theory which is discovered and formulated developmentally in close conjunction with intensive analysis of data" (Strauss, 1987, p. 23).

- "Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 12).

- Grounded theory results from researchers who "develop an integrated set of theoretical concepts from their empirical materials that not only synthesize and interpret them but also show processual relationships" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 508).

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- Grounded theory is "distinctly perspectival in ways fully compatible with what are now understood as situated knowledges" (Clarke, 2005, p. xxvii).

Now that this section has defined grounded theory both as method and as product, this conversation moves on to addressing other definitive aspects of grounded theory. Grounded theory researchers do not begin their research with preconceived theories in mind (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory research does not employ the "à priori operationalization of theoretical concepts;" instead, it looks for "indicators of provisional concepts in the data" (Titscher et al, 2000, p. 77). Researchers begin with areas of study from which theories are allowed to emerge from the data. This notion of emergence is foundational to the approach's building of theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). As such, the focus of this approach is on exploration and the generation of hypotheses. The testing of such hypotheses is left on the proverbial back burner (Titscher et al, 2000, p. 77). Therefore, the following subsections offer more information on general assumptions behind grounded theory, the issue of emergence, the notion of grounding, the development of theoretical frameworks, the roles of tabula rasa versus informed inquiry in directing research, the conflict of generating theory versus hypothesis testing, the conflict of generating theory versus verifying theory, and issues of induction versus deduction.

3.2.3.a Assumptions of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory does not involve making and testing statements about relationships between dependent variables and independent variables. The emphasis of grounded theory is not that of conventional hypothesis testing (Strauss and Corbin, 1998,

p. 41). The main purpose of grounded theory research is to develop theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; and Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Locke, 2001; Charmaz, 2005). Accordingly, despite any epistemological and philosophical differences amongst those working within grounded theory, there is a mix of generally accepted assumptions that underlie grounded theorists' work.

Eaves's (2001) statement of grounded theory assumptions provides a good example of shared general assumptions despite competing points of view. Although one could suggest that Eaves (2001) maintains allegiance to the classical side (Glaser and Strauss, 196; Glaser, 1978 and 1992), her review of the assumptions of grounded theory seems inclusive to all involved. She sums up the assumptions as

- Inquiry is structured by discovery of social and social psychological processes.

- Data collection and analysis phases of research proceed simultaneously.

- Both the processes and products of research are shaped from the data rather than from preconceived logically deduced theoretical frameworks.

- Analytic processes prompt discovery and theory development rather than verification of pre-existing theories.

- Theoretical sampling refines, elaborates, and exhausts conceptual categories.

- Grounded theory methodology is not only aimed at studying processes, but also assumes that making theoretical sense of social life is itself a process.

- The systematic application of grounded theory analytical techniques leads progressively to more abstract analytical levels (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1983) (Eaves, 2001, pp. 655, 656).

Strauss's pragmatic and symbolic interactionist background caused Strauss and Corbin's (1998) assumptions of grounded theory to reflect those presented by Eaves (2001). However, they focus more on symbolic interactionism. Straus and Corbin argue (a) that those working within grounded theory need to get out into the field to truly find out what is going on out there. (b) The theories one discovers, grounded in data, are relevant to the development of one's field of study, and this work provides a basis for social action. (c) The phenomena and human action one observes and investigates are complex and full of variability. (d) Additionally, people "are actors who take an active role in responding to problematic situations." (e) Researchers should be aware that people act on the basis of meaning. (f) Meaning is continuously defined and refined by way of interactions. (g) Those studying such interactions and meanings must be sensitive to the processual nature of events. (h) Lastly, grounded theorists must have "an awareness of the interrelationships among conditions (structure), action (process), and consequences" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 9, 10).

Although Charmaz has her share of long lists of assumptions regarding grounded theory, she also provides a concise, brief list of assumptions that sums up this section well. Charmaz (1990/1994) states that the grounded nature of grounded theory research is threefold. 1) Researchers pay close attention to their data. 2) Researchers' theoretical analyses develop directly from their interpretations of processes within their data. And, 3) in the end, researchers must compare their analyses with the extant literature and theory (Charmaz, 1990/1994, p. 77).

The three sets of assumptions presented above bring the conversation to its next topic, the role of extant, pre-existing theory within grounded theory research. In the lists

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above, the authors address the importance of data guiding one's research, not extant, pre-existing theory. However, although all grounded theorists support the sovereignty of data driven theory, different theorists believe that outside theories have different roles to play in the research process.

3.2.3.b Blank Slate versus Informed Inquiry

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of grounded theory is to develop new theory that emerges inductively through context specific data from the field. The whole idea is to have theory that speaks from the situation, actors, and process involved, not from some detached, deduced pre-existing theory floating around the ether. Therefore, when beginning and developing one's grounded research, the role of extant theory becomes a point of contention amongst grounded theorists. They all agree and disagree with each other based on the degree to which one considers extant theory during one's grounded theory research. Once again, differences of opinion seem to split along the lines of classical grounded theorists and current more interpretive grounded theorists.

Representing the classical approach, Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978 and 1992) advocate varying degrees of theoretical *tabula rasa*. Glaser and Strauss (1967), by way of a footnote at the beginning of their book, tip their hats at pre-existing theory as a means of providing perspective for identifying relevant data and abstract categories within their data. This understanding of the role of extant, pre-existing theory is shared with the more interpretivist researchers (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1994 and 1998; Locke, 2001), the constructivist researchers (Charmaz, 1991, 1995, 2003,

and 2005; Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001), and the postmodernist researchers (Clarke, 2005).

However, later in their book, Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend that grounded theory researchers literally "ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 37). As Glaser (1978) continues writing, and perhaps in response to the divergence of Strauss from the authors' original work on grounded theory, he becomes less and less hospitable to extant, pre-exiting theory having any influence on his understanding and practice of grounded theory. He increasingly becomes an advocate for *tabula rasa* grounded theory (Glaser, 1978 and 1992). This type of attitude provides fodder for the constructivist and constructivist-friendly critiques of other grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2000; Locke, 2001; Clarke, 2005).

A primary characteristic of the more current interpretivist grounded theorists is the honesty and awareness of one's own role and personal interactionist involvement in conducting grounded theory research. As such, these grounded theorists are comfortable, and cautious, admitting that, "rather than reflecting a *tabula rasa*, grounded theorists bring to their studies the general perspectives of their disciplines, their own philosophical, theoretical, substantive, and methodological proclivities, their particular research interests, and their biographies" (Charmaz, 1990/1994, p. 88). Being aware of one's baggage makes one more cautious of bias and influence than one who is oblivious to one's baggage. Accordingly, grounded theorists do not bring with them "a set of finely-honed preconceived concepts and categories automatically. Should grounded theorists

apply such concepts and categories – even their own previous ones – to new data, they must justify them" (Charmaz, 1990/1994, p. 88).

Lastly, some argue that without some theoretical sensitivity to inform one's research, data on its own can culminate in mundane descriptions. The grounded theorist needs theoretical scrutiny, direction, and development to inform his or her data. Data alone is insufficient. One's data must address and/or confront theoretical issues (Charmaz, 2005). Regardless, one must be cautious so as to not make the mistake of forcing one's data into preconceived theoretical categories – accidentally or not.

All of this attention from all of the camps within grounded theory regarding cautious awareness of extant, pre-existing theory brings up another definitive characteristic of grounded theory. Grounded theorists are concerned about the role of pre-existing theory because their method revolves around the emergence of theory from their data. Therefore, the next subsection discusses the significance of emergence within grounded theory.

3.2.3.c Emergence

The emergence of categories, concepts, relationships, and, ultimately, theory from one's data is paramount to grounded theory. "Emergence is the foundation of our approach to theory building . . . A researcher cannot enter an investigation with a list of preconceived concepts, a guiding theoretical framework, or a well thought out design" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 34). Therefore, grounded theorists are sensitive in their approach to allowing concepts and designs to emerge from their data. As it relates to this

discussion of grounded theory, the actual process of emergence will show up within the coding and analysis sections that follow.

Just as differences pop up between classical and current interpretivist grounded theorists with regard to blank slate versus informed inquiry, differences arise with regard to emergence as well. The objective positivist underpinnings of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978 and 1992) treat the emergence of categories, concepts, relationships, and theory as objective emergent entities of their own accord. Interpretivist, interactionist, and constructivist approaches identify this type of objectivity as false and inauthentic. These grounded theorists' cognizance of subjectivity causes them to critique the naivety of their objectivist colleagues.

The interpretivist, interactionist, and constructivist grounded theorists recognize that subjective meanings emerge from the interpretation of data and from experience. Additionally, these subjective meanings change as experiences change (Reynolds, 2003). Charmaz (2000) argues that "most grounded theorists write as if their data have objective status. ... 'The data do not lie'" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 514). She continues her critique arguing that data are narrative constructions involving the viewer and the viewed – and anyone else affecting the discourse. Later, in the same piece, she states that "a constructivist grounded theory recognizes that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed. Data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, the 'discovered' reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 523, 524). Therefore, both sides of the objectivist/subjectivist divide employ the terminology and concept of emergence, but

they have different ways of understanding what emergence means in their practice of grounded theory research.

3.2.3.d Grounding

In addition to the notion of emergence, the issue of grounding is of pivotal importance to grounded theorists. When grounding one's research, one does not deduce one's findings from preconceived, logically deduced theoretical frameworks. Instead, one's data shapes both the processes and products of the research (Charmaz, 1983/1994). The researcher ultimately grounds his or her abstract analysis with actual real-world experience by using materials collected in everyday life (Charmaz, 1980).

Theory that is grounded is theory derived from systematically collected and analyzed data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The theory can then be illustrated by characteristic examples from the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). "Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 6). And, since such theory is so intimately grounded in data, the theory will endure despite inevitable modifications and reformulations of the theory.

Excitingly, the notion of grounding is one in which there is relative agreement amongst the divergent voices within grounded theory. The significance, utility, and necessity of grounding can even be seen within Charmaz's (1990/1994) social constructionist phraseology. "By starting with data from the lived experience of the research participants, the researcher can, from the beginning, attend to how they construct their worlds. . . . In their sociological constructions, grounded theorists aim to create

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theoretical categories from the data and then analyze relationships between key categories" (Charmaz, 1990/1994, p. 68).

Granted, the various camps within grounded theory have different understandings of the utility of grounding. Within positivistic research designs, grounding serves to permit the researcher to get closer to useful language that will increase the fidelity of his or her future objective research. Meanwhile, within an interpretivist research design, grounding is considered to be essential to meaning making. As such, grounding contextualizes ideas gleaned from the data to the particulars of the people, places, and times involved the study (O'Conner et al., 2008).

Once one has his or her categories, concepts, relationships, and theory emerging from one's grounded research, one can begin to piece together one's grounded theoretical framework(s). The following subsection describes and discusses the theoretical frameworks that emerge within grounded theory research.

3.2.3.e Theoretical Frameworks

The final product of grounded theory research is a grounded substantive or formal theory – not that the resulting theory is final; grounded theorists are very aware of the contextuality and the modifiability of their grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This theory is contingent upon the construction of a grounded theoretical framework that pieces together, describes, and explains the different aspects, and their relationships, that emerge from one's data. Just as there appears to be general agreement across the field of grounded theory regarding the notion of emergence, the

authors within grounded theory also seem to have shared understandings of grounded theoretical frameworks, even if they do have different ways of creating them.

Grounded theory research involves developing increasingly abstract ideas about subjects' meanings, actions, interactions, and worlds. Grounded theorists do so by seeking specific data that allows them to fill out, refine, and/or check their emerging conceptual categories. Grounded theorists then use such categories, and the relationships between categories, to portray their understandings of subjects' meanings, actions, and interactions; to propose abstract interpretations of empirical relationships; and to create conditional statements regarding the implications of such analyses (Charmaz, 2005). The result is a grounded theoretical framework.

3.2.3.f Generating Theory versus Testing Hypotheses

The description of theoretical frameworks above segues well into this subsection's topic of generating theory versus testing hypotheses. The effort and attention involved in generating grounded theoretical frameworks, which researchers seek to transform into grounded substantive or formal theory, can be thwarted by the seductive distractions of logico-deductive hypothesis testing (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Locke, 2001). The emphasis in grounded theory is the generation of hypotheses and theory, not the testing of hypotheses. Hypothesis testing can be considered an afterthought (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Due to the constant comparison techniques within grounded theory research, hypotheses will be developed, promoted, and dispelled fluidly as the hypotheses and theoretical framework are refined and reformulated with successive data collection and analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1983/1994 and 1990/1994; Strauss and

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Corbin, 1998; Locke, 2001; O'Conner et al., 2008). Therefore, this discussion moves on to the larger issue of generating theory versus verifying theory. These two subsections are related, but the following discussion of theory generation versus theory verification is a larger macro issue within grounded theory.

3.2.3.g Generating Theory versus Verifying Theory

The issue of generating theory versus verifying theory within grounded theory is an interesting one. The matter gets a lot of attention in books and journals even though there is agreement on the matter, at least on a macro level, amongst the people working within grounded theory. Nevertheless, it continues to be a topic of discussion in the literature. The staying power of this issue most likely results from the language grounded theorists use to discuss their work (Katz, 1983) and from the hegemony of quantitative research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1983, 2000, and 2005; Clarke, 2005), coupled with a lack of understanding about grounded theory (O'Conner et al., 2008; Eaves, 2001; Goulding, 1998).

Grounded theorists agree that the purpose of grounded theory is to generate theory. Imbedded in the grounded theory generating activities are constant comparison procedures that continuously "generate" and "verify" concepts, hypotheses, and theories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Morse and Field, 1995). The "generation of theory through comparative analysis both subsumes and assumes verifications and accurate descriptions, but *only* to the extent that the latter are in the service of generation" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 28). Therefore, the conflict of generation or verification should not even be an issue. But, it remains.

As stated previously, part of the problem might exist within the language of grounded theory. Katz (1983), like Glaser and Strauss, and just about any other grounded theorist, points out that generation and verification are inseparable. The grounded theory linguistic contrast between generation and verification perpetuates the problem. Some outside the field of grounded theory would interpret the linguistic divide as suggesting that grounded theory, and qualitative research in general, is simply a preliminary step in a larger research process.

Charmaz (1983/1994) also addresses the problem of language within grounded theory practices as it relates to this topic. Charmaz argues that "the language of grounded theory method relies on terms commonly used in quantitative research and, I believe, this language lags behind actual development of the method" (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 95). She illustrates her idea by pointing out that the terms the quantitatively trained Glaser gave grounded theory persist. "Terms such as coding, comparison groups, and theoretical sampling reflect the language of quantitative research and often elicit images of logical deductive quantitative procedures" (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 95).

Earlier, this discussion stated that grounded theory procedures naturally involve both generation and verification. However, it is important to keep in mind the grounded theory paradigm in which one makes such a statement. "Grounded theorists do not follow the traditional quantitative canons of verification. They do, however, check their developing ideas with further specific observations, make systematic comparisons between observations, and, often, take their research beyond the confines of one topic, setting, or issue" (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 97). It is possible that this type of research

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endeavor, mistakenly considered from a quantitative point-of-view, could be confused with traditional verification.

Tied into grounded theory's possible problem with language is the reigning dominance of quantitative paradigms – if not the reigning dominance of an all out quantitative culture. Even grounded theorists who want to get away from a quantitative mindset sometimes cannot as a result of their indoctrination in the quantitative rhetoric of verification (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Some researchers continue to generate theories from qualitative data, but they do not explicitly refer to their efforts as generating theory because the have gotten too wrapped up in formulating and articulating their ideas within the rhetoric of verification (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 17). Researchers have been taught to think that it is scientific to apply an analytical framework to their areas of study. The scientific practice of generating theory from concepts, hypotheses, and theories that emerge from one's data, through a grounded theory methodology, run counter to that idea. Accordingly, too much attention or concern towards testing and verification can easily block one's efforts to generate theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Researchers who do manage to work within a grounded theory approach, rather than from a conventional quantitative approach, and who wish to generate theory, might have to "brook the negative, sometimes punitive, attitudes of their colleagues or professors" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 10). Ideas like this were one of the reasons Glaser and Strauss wrote *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Through their book, Glaser and Strauss hoped

> To strengthen the mandate for generating theory, to help provide a defense
> against doctrinaire approaches to verification, and to reawaken and
> broaden the picture of what sociologists can do with their time and efforts.
> It should also help students to defend themselves against verifiers who
> would teach them to deny the validity of their own scientific intelligence.

By making generation a legitimate enterprise, and suggesting methods for it, we hope to provide the ingredients of a defense against internalized professional mandates dictating that sociologists research and write in verification rhetoric, and against the protests of colleagues who object to their freedom in research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 7).

Some forty years after Glaser and Strauss published this passage, Charmaz points out that "the lingering hegemony of positivism still makes controversial research suspect" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 511).

3.2.3.h Induction and Deduction

Before concluding this section on defining grounded theory, and since the previous subsection brought up the issue of language within grounded theory, it might be useful to clarify the issue of induction and deduction in grounded theory. It is generally understood that grounded theory is an inductive method. Grounded theorists casually toss around the term "induction." However, induction is not the only approach to understanding that occurs within grounded theory research. It might be the primary approach to knowledge formation, but grounded theory research and analysis relies on both induction and deduction to generate grounded theories.

Glaser (1992), Strauss and Corbin (1998), and Charmaz (2005) make it a point to address the roles of induction and deduction within grounded theory. Charmaz points out that no qualitative method rests solely on induction. She shows that people's interpretations of data shape the questions they ask and the conceptual categories they identify. Glaser's approach is similar. He identifies grounded theory as an inductive method, but he goes on to say that, based on emergent codes within the data, grounded theory uses deduction in order to derive conceptual guides as to where to take one's

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analysis next. "This is an action of conceptual elaboration: systematic deduction from emerging theory's explanations and interpretations" (Glaser, 1992, p. 102). Strauss and Corbin claim that, as in all science, there is in fact an interplay between induction and deduction throughout the research process. The reason that grounded theory is identified as an inductive method is due to its focus on emergence for grounding theories in data.

This subsection concludes this dissertation's definition of grounded theory. The remainder of this section addresses paradigms at play within grounded theory, the topics of theory and theorizing, and an overview of the various activities within the practice of grounded theory research.

3.2.4 Paradigms within Grounded Theory

Up until this point in this dissertation's discussion of grounded theory, any differences amongst the relevant grounded theorists have been organized dichotomously between classical, or traditional, grounded theory and interpretive grounded theory. Although this classification has been useful so far, it is a bit too simplistic for a continued explication of grounded theory, the various activities within the practice of grounded theory, and the relevance and use of grounded theory in this dissertation. In order to provided a better informed, well-rounded overview of grounded theory practice, this section, much like the section concerning differing paradigms within existentialism, organizes the relevant contributors to grounded theory by way of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological paradigms.

Burrell and Morgan's sociological paradigms do not provide a perfect way of organizing grounded theorists. For example, some would point out that Burrell and

Morgan's functionalist paradigm includes understanding organizational reality through hypothesis testing. As this dissertation has already established, no grounded theorist seeks to understand any reality by way of hypothesis testing – at least not in the terminology of quantitative research. Grounded theorists are interested in generating hypotheses about realities – which frequently end up being tested in a qualitative sense by way of grounded theory's constant comparison analysis. Nevertheless, as a heuristic organizing device, Burrell and Morgan's sociological paradigms work within a contextual understanding of grounded theory.

To provide as clear an understanding as possible with regard to organizing the different voices within grounded theory, this section addresses why such differences developed in the first place. Then, the sociological paradigms applicable to this discussion are identified and explained, along with the grounded theorists associated with each paradigm. Lastly, the section concludes by discussing which paradigm is most applicable to this dissertations research and why.

3.2.4.a Paradigmatic Differentiation within Grounded Theory

As mentioned in the brief history of grounded theory earlier, there was practically a paradigmatic fault line lying between Glaser and Strauss when they published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Glaser's roots were in quantitative inquiry. Strauss's roots were in symbolic interactionist qualitative inquiry. Although this complex mix of methodological backgrounds and influences provided grounded theory with a diverse set of methodological procedures and analytical tools, such a mix also provided ample opportunities for disagreement and divergence.

Glaser and Strauss's partnership eventually ended with Strauss becoming more postpositivistic and social interactionistic (O'Connor et al., 2008). It also ended with Glaser accusing Strauss of performing research that was something other than grounded theory even though Strauss still called it grounded theory (Glaser, 1992). Matter of fact, Glaser was so upset by Strauss's developments of grounded theory that he wrote Strauss to tell him to take back what he had written in *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Glaser, 1992). He also accused Strauss and Corbin of abusing his intellectual property rights (Glaser, 1992).

Strauss had no qualms with continuing to develop grounded theory in ways and directions he thought appropriate. Additionally, Strauss knew that others would do/were doing the same. Strauss and Corbin write, "no inventor has permanent possession of the invention – certainly not even the name – and furthermore we would not wish to do so" (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 283).

During the 1980s and 1990s, other soon to be prominent grounded theorists were continuing to develop on Glaser and Strauss's (1967) work. Researchers dissatisfied with the objectivism of traditional grounded theory were developing ways to make grounded theoretical analysis more subjective. Charmaz (1983, 1990, 1991, 2000, and 2005) used constructionism to inform her approach to grounded theory. She also included elements of critical theory (1980, 2000, and 2005), postmodernism (2000 and 2005), and pragmatism (2005) in her work. Clarke (2005), who actually studied under Strauss, focused on developing a postmodern grounded theory and creating additional "packages of tools" for use within grounded theory research. Locke (2001) sought ways to maximize the benefits of the various non-positivist approaches to grounded theory by

seeing each approach as being an option based on the nature and context of the issue

being studied and the researcher performing the study.

3.2.4.b Sociological Paradigms within Grounded Theory

As a reminder, Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological paradigms do not

provide a perfect fit for categorizing and describing the different approaches to grounded

theory. Nevertheless, they do provide a useful heuristic devise for doing so. O'Connor et

al. (2008) attempted to do a similar type of paradigmatic organization, but they failed to

do so in a way that accurately explicated the paradigms within grounded theory.

O'Conner et al. did not predicate their application of Burrell and Morgan's discussion of

objectivism and subjectivism and of their sociological paradigms with the methodological

underpinnings of grounded theory. For example, despite his positivistic nature, even

Glaser would be offended at O'Connor et al.'s suggestion that traditional grounded

theory, which they call the functionalist school of grounded theory, is preliminary to

quantitative verification (O'Conner et al., 2008, p. 42). Therefore, as this section divvies

up the relevant grounded theorists, it does so with a contextual awareness of the

methodological approaches of grounded theory.

The grounded theorists discussed within this dissertation fall into three of Burrell

and Morgan's four sociological paradigms. At times, some of the grounded theorists

move between sociological paradigms. Locke (2001) points out that the paradigmatic

lines within grounded theory are never very clearly drawn. The three contextually

understood applicable paradigms are the functionalist paradigm, the interpretive

paradigm, and the radical humanist paradigm. The functional paradigm has a positivistic

and postpositivistic epistemology of objectivism. The interpretive and radical humanist paradigms have an anti-positivistic epistemology of subjectivism.

The functionalist paradigm is rooted in sociological positivism, which suggests that social issues exist in a concrete world "out there" that can be objectively studied by a researcher (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This paradigm represents Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978 and 1992). Despite the vocal differences between Glaser and Strauss that have developed, this is also the paradigm of Strauss and Corbin (1994 and 1998). Although the authors suggest that they are aware of the influence of the researcher on the research situation, they still seek to "perfect" their postpositivistic approach with objective, scientistic terminology of reproducibility and generalizability.

As mentioned earlier while defining existentialism, within the radical humanist point-of-view, ideological superstructures in which people interact dominate individuals' consciousnesses. Living beneath omnipotent ideological superstructures cognitively separates individuals from their "true" consciousnesses. This cognitive separation prevents personal fulfillment (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Therefore, individuals working within the radical humanist paradigm concern themselves with breaking down social constraints that hamper human potential. This is where Charmaz (2000 and 2005) spends some of her time. This results from her developing grounded theory in ways that seek to advance, and advocate for, issues of social justice. Clarke (2005) also spends some time here as she applies some of her Foucaultian references to her postmodern grounded theory practices.

Lastly, and of primary interest to this dissertation, is the interpretive paradigm of grounded theory research. The interpretive paradigm involves individuals trying to

observe on-going processes within society in order to understand individuals' behaviors and experiences (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Therefore, it emphasizes developing a subjective understanding of the socially-constructed world as it is experienced. Locke's (2001) emphasis on making use of grounded theory's various influences in order to better understand phenomenon subjectively fits perfectly within this paradigm. Charmaz spends some of her time here as well. Her constructionist grounded theory, which "takes a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510), fits well here as long as it is a method for gaining understanding rather than aiming to create social change. Essentially, Charmaz's grounded theory design and technique is interpretive. At times, the way she executes her design and technique pushes her into the radical humanist paradigm. The same goes for Clarke (2005). Her situational mapping provides a good example of emerging grounded theory techniques within the interpretive paradigm.

Just as this dissertation focuses on the interpretive paradigm within existentialism, while still permitting itself the use of existential ideas from the radical humanist camp, this dissertation relies on the grounded theory of the interpretive paradigm, while borrowing from the other paradigms from time to time. This dissertation's reliance on the grounded theory of the interpretive paradigm will become more evident as this discussion turns to the topics of coding, analysis, and evaluation. But, first, this discussion covers the topics of theory and theorizing within grounded theory.

3.2.5 Theory and Theorizing

With repeated statements concerning grounded theory's mission for developing theory, it is useful to define what grounded theorists consider to be theory and the activity of theorizing. This discussion of grounded theory has already touched on the topic of theory, but this subsection will expand the discussion of theory and theorizing a bit further. It does so by defining theory and identifying types of theory.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that "theory denotes a set of well-developed categories (e.g., themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing, or other phenomenon" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 22). Accordingly, theory is more than just a statement of findings. Theory includes explanations of processes that can help describe and understand phenomena. Despite their epistemological and methodological differences, Charmaz (1990/1994) offers a similar definition of theory. Charmaz suggests that theory explicates a phenomena, specifies concepts that categorize relevant phenomena, explains relationships between concepts, and creates a framework for understanding.

Grounded theorists are concerned with theories that are grounded in empirical data. The types of theory available for grounding vary depending on the epistemologies of the various grounded theorists. Functionalist grounded theorists typically strive for grounded formal theories, based on grounded substantive theories. Meanwhile, interpretivist and radical humanist grounded theorists are interested in grounded substantive theory – except for Clarke (2005). The extent of her postmodernism is

apparent in her arguments to abandon the notion of theory in favor of sensitizing

concepts, analytics, and the *activity* of theorizing.

Formal theories cover conceptual areas of interest and inquiry. Substantive

theories involve specific, empirical areas of interest and inquiry. For example, Locke

(2001) illustrates substantive theories by listing theories of decision-making and

leadership within management and organizational studies. Systems theory, contingency

theory, population ecology, and agency theories, theories that operate at high levels of

generality, illustrate formal theories. Formal theory and substantive theory, grounded or

not, are types of middle range theory (Merton, 1968).

The term middle range theory suggests other types of theory, both "above" and

"below." At the top of the theoretical hierarchy sits metatheory. Metatheory is all

encompassing theory that covers, in the broadest terms, the phenomena of concern to a

discipline (Lasiuk and Ferguson, 2005). Below metatheory are grand theories. Grand

theories offer abstract conceptual frameworks for organizing and defining disciplinary

knowledge. In their advocacy for grounded theories, Glaser and Strauss (1967) attack the

(at times) unassailable reputation of grand theories as "great man" theories. These

theories are held in place by tradition and disciplinary socialization. Then there are the

empirically testable middle range theories. These theories are of smaller scope and less

abstraction than grand theories. These theories offer limited sets of "assumptions from

which specific hypotheses are logically derived and confirmed by empirical

investigation" (Merton, 1968, p. 68). Lastly, there are situation specific, day-to-day

working hypotheses.

Middle range theories are of primary concern to social scientists performing

research in the field. The value and relevance of middle range theories is that they have

the capacity to describe and explain concrete phenomena that are of concern to one's

discipline (Merton, 1967; Morse and Field, 1995). Additionally, Denzin (1992) argues

that the issues facing social scientists are emergent phenomena involving diverse sets of

social actions and interactions. "It makes no sense to write a grand theory of something

that is always changing" (Denzin, 1992, p. 23). Therefore, grounded theorists of all

stripes seek to make contributions to their fields of study by way of their grounded

theories and theorizing.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to the activity of developing grounded theories,

substantive or formal, as theorizing. "Theorizing is the act of constructing from data an

explanatory scheme that systematically integrates various concepts through statements of

relationship" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 25). As such, the activity of theorizing does

not simply involve the conceiving or intuiting of ideas and concepts. It includes the

formulation of such ideas and concepts into a logical, systematic, and explanatory

framework (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

A reminder of the main difference between grounded theory and conventional

logico-deductive methods provides an example of the grounded theory activity of

theorizing. In the logico-deductive methods of research, which Locke (2001) also calls

hypothetico-deductive methods, the researcher begins his or her inquiry from a theory.

His or her investigation moves from the definitions of concepts and their relationships

downward to the "real world." According to the theory with which the researcher started

his or her investigation, the concepts and their relationships should be present, observable, measurable, and testable.

In grounded theory, the method of inquiry is reversed. In grounded theory, the researcher's interpretations of empirical data inform the definitions of concepts, the relationships amongst the concepts, and ultimately the theory (Locke, 2001). This is the process of theorizing grounded theory. A more specific discussion of the actual steps follows within the coding and analysis sections.

3.2.6 Sources of Information

In order to develop theories through theorizing, information for grounded theory can come from an array of sources. To the grounded theorist, everything can be data (Glaser, 1978). Interviews, field observations, documents, radio, video, and news media are all valid standard sources for information within grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). Information can also come from personal experiences, vignettes, and cases (Charmaz, 1980). Not only can information come from all of these sources, some grounded theorists recommend that data come from a multiplicity of sources during grounded theory research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Dey, 1999). Grounded theory researchers collect information from their various sources by way of theoretical sampling/purposive sampling. The sampling techniques used in this dissertation's research are discussed later in this chapter.

3.2.7 Coding within Grounded Theory Analysis

Coding and analysis are intertwined within grounded theory. The two take place simultaneously. This occurs as a result of the qualitative analytical nature of grounded theory, the use of the constant comparative method, and the recursive analytical underpinnings of grounded theory research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992; Charmaz, 1983, 1990, and 2005). However, the purpose of this section is to identify and define the various, relevant coding concepts and terms within grounded theory and this dissertation's research. Some coding concepts and terms will likely reappear in the analysis section as the discussion goes through the analytical steps of grounded theory.

3.2.7.a Identifying and Defining Coding Processes

Initial and early versions of grounded theory employed fairly open-ended guidelines for conducting grounded theory research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978 and 1992; Strauss, 1987; Charmaz, 1983 and 1990; Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001). This open-endedness permits researchers to pursue leads and ideas as they develop from the data (Charmaz, 1990/1994). More recent interpretations of grounded theory have made it more mechanistic (Strauss and Corbin, 1990 and 1998; Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001). "Grounded theory began with gentle guidelines, but now risks being reduced to rigid rules imposed on researchers and on research practices" (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001, p. 161). The problem with this is the concern that data might no longer be driving the generation of theory. Instead, the rigid procedures, dressed up in scientistic language, are actually hijacking the generation of theory. The tools might be controlling the craftsperson, so to speak.

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Within the literature, one will find three common types of coding: open coding, Strauss and Corbin's axial coding, and Strauss and Corbin's version of selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990 and 1998; Dey, 1999). Further, better informed reading of the literature will present alternatives to these coding procedures. The alternatives, which actually happen to be the original coding procedures, include open coding, theoretical coding, and Glaser and Strauss' and Glaser's version of selective coding.

Grounded theorists agree that open coding is the initial phase of grounded theory's constant comparative analysis. Here, the researcher goes line by line through his or her information, with no preconceived coding protocol. The codes arise from the researcher's interpretation of the information.

After this phase of coding is complete, the researcher goes through his or her information using theoretical coding (Glaser, 1992). Based on the categories, and their properties, that began to emerge from the open coding, theoretical coding yields conceptual relationships by way of constant comparison between and within pieces of information. Theoretical codes act as conceptual connectors within the information. Some consider theoretical coding and axial coding to be essentially the same (Dey, 1999). However, Strauss and Corbin's axial coding differs from theoretical coding in that axial coding forces a specified coding paradigm on the results of the open coding phase (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Lastly, there is selective coding – both Glaser's and Strauss's versions. One could argue that the differences between the authors' approaches to selective coding are a matter of splitting hairs, but to grounded theorists the difference could be considered at the heart of the grounded theory approach. According to Glaser (1992), and Glaser

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would say Glaser and Strauss (1967), selective coding involves ceasing "open coding and to delimit coding to only those variables that relate to the core variable, in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory" (Glaser, 1992, p. 75). Strauss and Corbin's (1990 and 1998) version involves more of a deliberative selecting of a core variable around which one codes related themes and concepts. The issue here lies within whether the "data" produced the core variable or whether the "researcher" produced the core variable. Stepping out of the functionalist paradigm into the interpretivist paradigm, or into the radical humanist paradigm, helps resolve this and similar issues. The subjectivist grounded theorists are well aware of the role of the researcher in interpreting his or her information and in interacting with that which he or she researches. The trick for the subjectivist is to be conscientious of one's role and biases.

3.2.7.b Charmaz's Redevelopment of Glaser's Coding

Returning to the sociological paradigms within grounded theory allows this conversation to address the coding scheme employed in this dissertation. Charmaz (1983/1994 and 1990/1994) has redeveloped grounded theory techniques. Despite her aversion to Glaser's positivism and her acceptance of Strauss's symbolic interactionism, she sides with Glaser over the proper way to conduct grounded theory analysis. Her techniques incorporate her constructivist approach to grounded theory while working within the framework of the original methods constructed and explicated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978) (Eaves, 2001).

Charmaz's (1983/1994 and 1990/1994) coding procedures focus on "coding for processes, actions, assumptions, and consequences rather than for topics" (Charmaz,

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1990/1994, p. 81). She suggests that doing so provides for greater analytic precision. One can treat her codes as conceptual categories or descriptive categories depending on their makeup and characteristics (Charmaz, 1983/1994).

Charmaz's (1983/1994) coding is a two-phase process. The first phase is initial coding. This phase is similar to Glaser's open coding. During initial coding, Charmaz looks for issues of context, the *absence* of information or issues, in vivo codes [codes that employ the research participants' own wordings], and processes. The second phase is focused coding.

Focused coding combines Glaser's theoretical and selective coding procedures. It is both selective and conceptual. This process of coding is selective in that the researcher has already gone through all of the information and materials, identifying and developing a useful set of categories. "It is conceptual because the codes employed raise the sorting of data to an *analytic* level rather than one that is used to summarize large amounts of information" (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 102).

The purpose for using focused coding is that it allows the researcher to both clarify categories within the data and to break down categories within the data. It does so by examining all of the data that each category covers and the variations in the data from each category. However, it is important to understand that the categories that develop are not treated separately as single topics. Due to grounded theory's heavy emphasis on process, grounded theorists weave categories together in order create a processual analysis. Through this analysis, grounded theorists can abstract and explicate experiences.

Lastly, "focused coding helps the researcher to outline a framework that preserves the complexities of everyday life. By showing relationships between categories in ways that explain the issues and events studied, focused coding helps to provide the ground work for developing explanations and predictions" (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 104).

Already, it is evident that this conversation has strayed into the realm of grounded theory analysis. As mentioned at the beginning of this subsection on coding, coding and analysis are constantly intertwined within grounded theory research. Therefore, this dissertation now moves on to address grounded theory analysis.

3.2.8 Analysis by way of Grounded Theory

Having identified and defined the coding terms and procedures that will be used in this dissertation, those of Charmaz, this section covers the processes of analysis into which the coding procedures are woven. First, this discussion covers the important grounded theory practice of constant comparative analysis. With the constant comparative method creating an umbrella over the entire analytic practice, this subsection then explains Charmaz's (1983/1994 and 1990/1994) method of analysis within grounded theory research.

Before moving on, it is necessary to point out that although this dissertation presents grounded theory's coding procedures and analytic methods in a linear, chronological way, the practice of grounded theory is recursive. For the most part, one will have different types of coding and analysis going on at the same time. Developments in the theory or concepts that emerge from the data might sensitize the researcher to go back through his or her data, to revise his or her codes, and/or to

redevelop concepts, categories, and his or her understandings of the relationships between categories.

3.2.8.a The Constant Comparative Method

Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain the constant comparison method in four stages. First, as the researcher is coding one's data, he or she constantly compares incidents applicable to each of the categories that emerge. Second, the researcher integrates categories and their properties by way of comparing them to each other. Third, this comparison allows the researcher to delimit the theory that emerges. Fourth, the researcher is able to write the theory. Glaser and Strauss also remind their readers that activities in these different stages "remain in operation simultaneously throughout the analysis and each provides continuous development to its successive stage until the analysis is terminated" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 105).

The comparing of incidents applicable to each category involves coding each incident in one's data into as many categories of analysis as possible. This takes place as various categories emerge from the data or as data emerge that fit existing categories. Here, Glaser and Strauss point out what they call a defining rule of the constant comparative method: "while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 106). This constant comparison of incidents in one's data begins to generate theoretical properties of the various categories.

Integrating categories and their properties begins by way of writing memos and continuing to code. However, the constant comparative units shift from comparisons of

incidents to comparisons of incidents to the properties of the categories that resulted from previous comparisons of incidents. "Thus the theory develops, as different categories and their properties tend to become integrated through constant comparisons that force the analyst to make some related theoretical sense of each comparison" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 109).

As one's theory develops, the constant comparative method begins to delimit the theory. This delimiting involves the theory and the categories from which it develops. Delimiting solidifies the theory by clarifying the logic of the theory and its categories, removing irrelevant properties of the theory and its categories, and "integrating elaborating details of properties into the major outline of interrelated categories" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 110). This delimiting process also allows the researcher to achieve parsimony of the variables and their formulation and a sense of scope concerning the applicability of the theory to a wide range of situations. However, this scope must keep a close correspondence of theory to data.

Lastly, with the emergent theory, the coded data, and his or her memos, the grounded theorist can write up his or her theory. The grounded theorist does so once he or she feels confident that "his or her analytic framework forms a systematic substantive theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 113). This writing of one's theory begins by the researcher collating his or her memos on each category. With this understanding of the constant comparative method within grounded theory, this discussion moves on to explain Charmaz's (1983/1994 and 1990/1994) method of analysis within grounded theory research.

3.2.8.b Charmaz's Redevelopment of Grounded Theory Analysis

Charmaz's initial and focused coding begins her system of analysis. In order to analyze data and to develop grounded theory, Charmaz uses a system of coding and memo writing within the context of the constant comparison method. Therefore, this discussion of her process of analysis builds upon the discussion that describes her coding process. This subsection focuses on the activities of memo writing, raising terms to concepts, and writing the theory.

Memo writing is an intermediate step between coding and writing the first draft of analysis (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 106). The memos one writes are written elaborations of ideas about the data, codes, and categories developing from the codes. Memo writing is important to the activity of coding because the memos tell what the codes are about. By systematically writing memos while one codes, one builds categories from the codes and fills them out. This activity of memo writing raises codes to categories that can be treated analytically. Charmaz (1990/1994) refers to this as raising terms to concepts.

"Raising terms to concepts means that the researcher takes a term or code, defines it succinctly, and analyzes it" (Charmaz, 1990/1994, p. 83). Raising terms or codes to concepts means that the researcher then handles the raised term or code as a conceptual category instead of a descriptive topic. The resulting conceptual category becomes part of the researcher's larger theoretical framework that specifies conditions within the area of study and offers explanations. Therefore, raising terms to concepts through memo writing connects the barebones analytic framework provided by coding with the soon to be polished ideas developed in one's finished draft (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 106).

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Just like Charmaz practices initial coding and focused coding, she also employs different levels of memo writing. She writes initial memos. Then, she sorts her memos. As the analysis develops, she integrates her memos.

Initial memo writing involves, as mentioned earlier, taking codes and developing them into topics or categories. As the researcher continues his or her analysis, he or she pays attention to whether or not particular categories manage to explicate major patterns or themes within the data. If one does, the researcher is supposed to cite the conditions within the data under which the particular category operates and when it varies. These initial memos also allow the researcher to explain how particular codes relate to other previously developed codes and categories through constant comparison. "Spelling out connections between categories assists in creating an integrated 'whole,' helps to reduce rambling, and aids in identifying implicit links, all of which tighten the work considerably" (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 108).

As one continues to write memos and analyze one's data, the researcher must give attention to sorting his or her memos. "Sorting one's memos simply means putting those that elucidate the same category together in order to clarify its dimensions and to distinguish it from other categories" (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 109). With grounded theory's emphasis on process, the sorting of one's memos allows the researcher to arrange his or her memos into phases of the processes that emerge. The researcher sorts both by content and by the ordering of experiences captured within the data.

As the grounded theorist's memos, categories, and codes get more and more organized, connected, and sorted, the theorist can begin integrating his or her developing memos. The integration of one's memos helps reveal the relationships between

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categories within the data. This process of discovery extends into the actual writing of one's emergent theory. This writing, revising, and rewriting of the theory by way of the integrated memos allows the researcher "to identify problems and arguments, make assumptions explicit, and sharpen the concepts" (Charmaz, 1990/1994, p. 86).

Ultimately, the process reaches a point when the grounded theorist is prepared to publish his or her grounded theory. The reader should note that no definitive statements of conclusion are used in this explanation of grounded theory analysis. Grounded theorists understand that the emergent natures of the subjects and processes they study would always lend themselves to further and further theory refinement and development.

3.3 Triangulation

The topic of triangulation as it relates to grounded theory is very similar to the issue of generation of theory versus verification of theory discussed earlier. The imposition of such a term onto grounded theory research misunderstands the language of the grounded theory paradigms and misunderstands the techniques and methods of grounded theory research. Nevertheless, grounded theory's purpose and practices should be able to satisfy one's need for a concept such as triangulation. Therefore, this section quickly defines the term triangulation, identifies some criticisms of triangulation, and then compassionately resolves the differences by pointing out how grounded theory research satisfies the concerns of the various competing approaches.

3.3.1 Defining Triangulation: Methodological Differences

Triangulation is a term borrowed from navigational studies and land surveying. It refers to using two or more fixed points to achieve a comprehensive fixed point of reference (Padgett, 1998). In quantitative and qualitative research, it typically means corroborating two or more sources, methods of analysis, theories, and/or observers for their data, data analysis, and/or interpretations (Sherman and Reid, 1994; Rubin and Babbie, 2005). Quantitative researchers who study concrete constructs or events have a need for establishing convergent validity through triangulation. Qualitative researchers tend to use triangulation as a means for achieving completeness in portraying the context of the topic they are studying (Sherman and Reid, 1994).

"Triangulation is an extension of the idea of validity in postpositivist research. It is not a core issue in interpretive research" (Willis, 2007, p. 220). Some argue that, from an interpretivist research paradigm, the social construction of reality points out that there is a multiplicity of realities; therefore, there isn't necessarily a need to get rid of all ideas of reality other than one "true" understanding of reality from my research (Willis, 2007). From a postmodern perspective, triangulation relies on merging three points in order to confirm validity, but there are no "set points" from which to triangulate in the first place (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994b, p. 482). Similarly, Denzin (1994) states that interpretation, within the paradigms of poststructuralism and postmodernism, is an artful political process in which there is no single interpretive truth. The image of a crystal replaces the image of the triangle. "Crystals are prisms that reflect and refract, creating ever-changing images and pictures of reality. Crystallization deconstructs the traditional idea of

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validity, for now there can be no single, or triangulated, truth" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994b, p. 482).

3.3.2 Triangulation within Grounded Theory

Fortunately for grounded theorists, grounded theory methodology can keep everyone happy because grounded theory methods reconcile the concerns of everyone involved. The grounded theory literature rarely gives that much attention to the topic of triangulation. Strauss and Corbin (1998) address the utility of verification, and validation, practices, such as triangulation, but they don't give the topic much attention. They prefer to focus on the importance of the theory itself and the process that created the theory. And, in the current literature Strauss and Corbin would be the authors most likely to make a fuss about triangulation within grounded theory research.

Glaser (1992) is not concerned with verification, let alone triangulation, while practicing grounded theory. It's not grounded theory's job to verify. However, when Glaser and Strauss (1967) were working together, verification was considered built into grounded theory by way of the constant comparisons and development and refinement of the emerging data. This is why grounded theory methodology can reconcile the differences between supporters and critics of triangulation. Grounded theory satisfies the needs identified by the triangulation concept through its uses of the constant comparative method, the generation of substantive theory, and theoretical sampling.

The constant comparative method within grounded theory requires the researcher to continuously compare information within and between cases, groups, categories, and concepts (Glaser and Straus, 1967; Charmaz, 1983/1994 and 1990/1994). In grounded

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theory, both the similarities and the differences between various comparison groups and concepts are important for both generating and delimiting theory. Such constant comparative analysis allows the researcher to understand and demonstrate "under what sets of structural conditions his hypotheses are minimized and maximized, and hence to what kinds of social structures his theory is applicable" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 231). Additionally, constant comparison between and amongst groups within a substantive area can generate substantive theory. Substantive theory generation is a purpose being grounded theory analysis.

As pointed out earlier in this dissertation, substantive theory is theory grounded on one particular substantive area of interest to the researcher (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Accordingly, theory generated from grounded theory research might only be applicable to that specific area. At the same time, substantive theory can have general implications and relevance to areas outside of its substantive area. This means that substantive theory can become a stepping stone to generating grounded formal theory. By extending even further one's comparison groups to involve different substantive areas, the potential for generating formal theory occurs. However, both the development of substantive and formal theory within grounded theory research involves theoretical sampling.

Theoretical sampling involves theoretical concepts, emerging from the constant comparative analysis, continuously guiding one's data collection (Glaser 1992). "Since grounded theorists systematically build their theoretical frameworks out of their observations, theoretical sampling is part of the progressive stages of analysis" (Charmaz, 1983/1994, p. 111, 112). This activity allows grounded theorists to completely fill out, or saturate, the theoretical properties of the situations they study and to sufficiently portray

the contexts of the situations they are studying. This chapter will more thoroughly discuss the practice of theoretical sampling later, in the "Description of Sample and Sampling Method" section. In this dissertation, constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling resulted in cases from multiple comparison groups. These groups included personnel (DHS Human Resources, MSPB, and USDA Human Resources), services administration (USDA Food and Nutrition Servcie), and security (FAA Information Systems Security and DOD).

3.4 Interviews for Collecting Information

In the case of this dissertation's research, semi-structured interviews were used to collect information for analysis within a grounded theory methodology. Research methodologists suggest that the nature of one's study should determine the information collection method one uses (O'Sullivan, Rassel, and Berner, 2003). In the case of this research, the research situation was developing an existential theoretical framework for viewing and understanding public administration by way of grounded theory. The emphasis of the research was on exploration, discovery, and generation of theory. Interviews are very important sources of information for grounded theory research (Morse and Field, 1995). Therefore, collecting information from Senior Executive Service members through interviews lent itself well to the purpose and nature of this dissertation's research.

There are three common types of interview formats: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Just as one's research area of interest and research questions determine one's research methodology, the nature and circumstances of one's research also

determines which type of interview schedule or protocol one uses. Consequently, this dissertation employed semi-structured interviews.

3.4.1 Structured Interviews

Structured interviews are the least flexible interview format (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000). They involve a set number of questions with standardized wording for each question. Accordingly, whenever the interviewer interviews respondents, the interviewer must ask each respondent the same questions. The order of the questions and the wording of the questions must remain consistent across all of the interviews (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000; Berg, 2001).

The rationale behind using structured interviews is that such interviews allow researchers to make easy, standardized comparisons between subjects' responses (Babbie, 1995). Therefore, it is necessary that interviewers do not reword questions or explain questions when they conduct their interviews. Such deviations from the structured interview might compromise the researcher's ability to make standardized comparisons between interviewees' responses.

The structured interview format is useful when the researcher has fairly certain ideas about the things they want to uncover by way of their interviews (Berg, 2001). This type of interview also assumes that the respondents all have a sufficiently common vocabulary that allows the researcher to create questions that mean the same things to all respondents (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000). Therefore, the meaning of each question must be the same for each respondent (Berg, 2001). Lastly, structured

interviews operate on the assumption that "one's thoughts are intricately related to one's actions" (Berg, 2001, p. 69).

3.4.2 Unstructured Interviews

Whereas structured interviews are rigidly designed and worded so as to ensure that each respondent is asked the exact same questions in order to make standardized comparisons between responses, unstructured interviews do not use a set list, or schedule, of questions (Berg, 2001). Unstructured interviews are the most flexible type of interview format in which respondents are free to share with the interviewer ideas, experiences, feelings, perceptions, etc., that they think are relevant to the topic in which the researcher is interested (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000). Additionally, the interviewer is free to ask any probing or follow-up questions he or she would like based on the interviewees' responses. "An unstructured interview is essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent" (Babbie, 1983, p. 253).

The openness of the unstructured interview allows the researcher to get as complete an understanding as possible about respondents' understandings and knowledge of things. The interview format does not impose boundaries on where the researcher's inquiry can go. This freedom allows the researcher to explore deeply whatever topic interests him or her.

Obviously, the unstructured interview format operates from a different set of assumptions than does the structured interview format. Researchers using an unstructured interview format assume that they cannot know for sure in advance what all

the useful and relevant interview questions would be for their research interests. Also, they do not assume that all of their respondents possess the same vocabularies and understandings of questions and concepts (Berg, 2001). However, the freedom of unstructured interviews potentially forfeits the focus of the research topic and potentially results in large, difficult to manage amounts of interview data.

3.4.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview format seeks to combine the opportunity for probing and follow-up questions with the focus and guidance of a set list of interview questions. The interviewer typically asks respondents certain questions or brings up special topics in a systematic and consistent order, but the respondents have the freedom to digress (Berg, 2001). Therefore, although the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee is generally structured and the main objectives of the research have been explained, during the semi-structured interview, respondents are permitted, and even encouraged, to answer questions and discuss topics in ways that they think are relevant and interesting. Respondents do not have to know or work within definitions of concepts provided by the interviewer. They are free to express their understandings of experiences using their own definitions of things (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000). Accordingly, the interviewer asks probing questions in order to better understand the respondent's definitions and experiences.

The semi-structured interview format seeks to facilitate systematic comparisons between interviewees' responses to certain questions and/or topics while allowing them to address the interviewer's research interest from their own perspectives. This interview

format incorporates an awareness that individuals understand the world in a multiplicity of ways (Berg, 2001). As such, this format permits exploration and discovery within roughly bounded areas of study. This is why this dissertation used the semi-structured interview format.

As a result of employing a grounded theory methodology, this dissertation did not have preconceived hypotheses to test based on collected information. Instead, this dissertation sought to generate a theoretical framework and hypotheses from information collected in the field. Based on the grounded theory evolution of the dissertation's research area of interest and research questions by way of recursively interacting with the interviewees, analyses of the interviews, literature, and people both in and out of the field, this dissertation's research was informed enough so as to not benefit from unstructured interviews but did not have or want to have a preconceived focus that would benefit from a structured interview format. This dissertation's research area of interest and this dissertation's use of grounded theory resulted in the use of the semi-structured interview as the most beneficial format.

Having addressed the nature of qualitative research, the reasons for using a qualitative approach in this research, and the information collection used within this research, the remainder of this chapter first addresses the reasons for using a grounded theory methodology. Then, the sample from which the information comes is described.

3.5 Description of Sample and Sampling Techniques

3.5.1 Description of Sample

Information for this dissertation's analysis and discussion came from semi-structured interviews with Senior Executive Service (SES) members. Members of the SES are top level administrators who serve within the highest ranks of government, just below the top Presidential appointees. "SES members are the major link between these appointees and the rest of the Federal work force. They operate and oversee nearly every government activity in approximately 75 Federal agencies" (Office of Personnel Management, 2005).

A range of agencies were examined. The selection of interviewees began by working with colleagues in the private sector, academia, and in various offices of the Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Labor (DOL). Doing so involved purposive sampling, theoretical sampling, and adapting a snowball sampling approach. With the assistance of these gatekeepers, access was obtained to, and in-depth interviews were performed with, six SES members. One interviewee worked in human resources within USDA and now works within DHS. One interviewee recently retired from the MSPB. That interviewee currently works for a nonprofit organization that seeks to attract highly motivated and qualified workers to work for the Federal government. Two interviewees worked for USDA as high level administrators in charge of multiple programs. One interviewee worked for DOL as a high level administrator in charge of multiple Federal employee programs within DOL. And, one interviewee worked for DOT – FAA as high level administrator in charge of multiple security programs. Including the interviewees'

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current and pervious positions, the interviewees' had and discussed experiences within the Department of Defense (DOD), DHS, DOL, DOT-FAA, MSPB, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and USDA. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the subjects' identities, the particular agencies and sub-departments within these departments will not be identified due to the limited number of SES members working within each of these Departments. The information obtained through the interviews with these SES members was sufficient to saturate the parsimonious categories that emerged from the data to form this dissertation's substantive theory.

3.5.2 Description of Sampling Techniques

The selection of these SES members and the use of their interviews as information for analysis represent different approaches to the practice of sampling. The ways interviewees were chosen, and gaining access to interviewees, represent examples of opportunity sampling (snowball sampling), purposive sampling, and theoretical sampling. These methods of sampling vary from more mainstream methods used in quantitative, hypothesis testing studies, but are widely recognized as valid within specific contexts.

In quantitative studies, researchers often employ statistical sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The goal of this sampling is to select a portion of the population that one hopes will represent the population as a whole. Doing so would allow researchers to test their hypotheses and to generalize their findings to whatever population it is that they are studying. However, "in reality, one can never be certain that a sample is completely representative" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 214).

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This dissertation does not seek to test hypotheses and predict outcomes that are generalizable to all people in all situations. Instead, this dissertation's purpose is to develop new theory. This dissertation is a theory-building study. As such, "when building theory inductively, the concern is with representativeness of concepts and how concepts vary dimensionally" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 214). Therefore, as one develops one's sampling procedure/frame, one looks for subjects who have knowledge and experiences that represent theoretically relevant concepts. Doing so allows the researcher to compare conceptual properties and dimensions as they relate to the developing theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This type of sampling illustrates the practices of purposive sampling (Lincoln and Guba, 1983; Trochim, 2002) and theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1983/1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Locke, 2001).

3.5.2.a Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is an example of non-probability sampling in which a researcher identifies a specific group with particular significance to sample for the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1983; Trochim, 2002). This type of sample ensures that those studied are relevant to the study's specific area of concern. In the case of this research on existential public administration, interviews with members of the SES should elicit information that is well informed of bureaucratic, governmental effort and organizational life. Additionally, the interviews should be informative of these individuals' personal experiences of public administration and public policy. Lastly, the SES members are in

positions that should enable them to be able to express themes and ideas relevant to this dissertation's research and, therefore, efficient for qualitative analysis.

3.5.2.b Theoretical Sampling

Similarly to purposive sampling, theoretical sampling allows the researcher to sample whichever groups or events that will provide relevant material for his or her analysis (Charmaz, 1983). Theoretical sampling varies from purposive sampling in a few useful ways. Theoretical sampling concerns itself first with incidents, events, and/or contexts more so than with individual people, so-to-say. These incidents, events, and/or contexts represent situations towards which individuals or organizations respond through some sort of action, interaction, and/or personal effect (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 202). Additionally, theoretical sampling procedures try to find out how concepts vary along dimensional lines rather than trying to find out how people are distributed across some dimension of a concept (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). During inductive theory development, researchers "do not know which variables are important, what their properties are, or how these vary dimensionally" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 280). Therefore, the developing theory guides the sampling, and the researcher aims the sampling toward the development of the emerging theory (Charmaz, 1985). As such, the sample is able to evolve as the emerging theory evolves.

3.5.2.c Opportunity Sampling

Lastly, opportunity sampling, or snowball sampling, uses the assistance of people with access to otherwise difficult to engage populations. The ability to interview SES

members depended on the ability to gain access to them. This was a challenging endeavor even with the use of gatekeepers that were either personal or professional acquaintances with SES members. There was a large degree of reluctance on the part of SES members to be interviewed in general and to be interviewed by a Ph.D. candidate with a dissertation's research interest and questions such this. All five of this dissertation's gatekeepers shared and stated this perception as well. Although SES members are civil service administrators, their proximity to, and interactions with, political figures and policy make their roles politically charged. Accordingly, this politically charged atmosphere in which the SES members work causes many to be weary of potentially putting themselves into positions/predicaments in which something that they might say could be used in damaging ways against themselves, their organizations, or the Administration. One gatekeeper from DHS suggested that the reluctance of high level public officials, appointees or professionals, to be interviewed or to speak at public appearances has increased substantially over the past eight years or so. The difficulty in reaching and interviewing potential SES interviewees is further evidenced by the way in which multiple potential interviewees who had accepted invitations from the gatekeepers to consider being interviewed either avoided communication with this researcher or explained that once their departments' lawyers looked over the semi-structured interview protocol and the IRB "consent to be interviewed form" the lawyers suggested that they not participate.

Typically, snowball sampling involves one selected person connecting the researcher to another who then connects the researcher with another and so on. In the case of this dissertation, gatekeepers weeded through and selected potential SES

interviewees for inclusion in this dissertation. Since SES members are the highest up administrator, none of the SES members could continue the snowball method upward. The necessity for confidentiality and anonymity inhibited horizontal snowballing on the part of the interviewees. In order to access various SES members in relevant departments and agencies as the research items emerged, this research initiated a number of snowballs with varying degrees of success. For example, some gatekeepers managed to provide access to an SES member or two, others could provide contact with other people who might be able to provide access to an SES member or two. Meanwhile, other gatekeepers could not manage to keep the snowball frozen in that they could not provide access to anyone due to the reluctance of people in the field.

Concluding Comments on the Methodology Chapter

This methodology chapter has explained the rationale for using the qualitative method of grounded theory, the practice and product of grounded theory, the way in which information was collected for analysis, and those involved in contributing information to this dissertation's research. As one reads this dissertation's results and discussion chapters, one will be able to understand the methodological approach involved in arriving at the dissertation's theoretical product. Additionally, the SES members interviewed during this dissertation's research provide both useful and thoroughly interesting insight and experiences for this dissertation and for those who read it. Now that this dissertation has discussed both the literature and the methodology that informs it research, this dissertation continues with the following results chapter.

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Chapter Four

Results

Following the methodology chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the grounded theory analysis. This chapter does so by way of five sections. In the first section, the introduction quickly reiterates this dissertation's use of grounded theory. It also identifies the key categories/themes identified during the grounded theory analysis and provides a road map for discussing them. The next three sections define, explain, and identify each of the theoretical categories/themes and their relevance to the theoretical framework discovered during this research. The last section identifies and explains the framework's core category, "the Sisyphusian Predicament."

4.1 Introduction

By way of its grounded theoretical analysis of the interview information, this dissertation identified the emergence of three categories, or themes, that appeared to organize what was happening within the information – what it was that the SES members were saying, doing, and perceiving. These categories included "the environment," "the work," and "the individual." The theoretical aspects of each category combined to form this study's core category/theme, "the Sisyphusian predicament." This core

category/theme threads together the other categories/themes by way of a metaphorical application of existential concepts.

Obviously, these categories are not isolated, autonomous items. Conceptually, they are interconnected. Additionally, the categories themselves share codes and themes with each other, and they rely on each other for their own definitions and explanations. Therefore, it is important to recall that, within grounded theory research, one does not treat the categories that develop as single, individual topics. As a result of grounded theory's heavy emphasis on constant comparison and process, grounded theorists weave categories together in order to create a processual analysis.

The constant comparison of incidents applicable to each emerging category involves coding each incident into as many categories of analysis as possible. This allows the researcher to introduce variation into his or her categories. The researcher is supposed to push commonalities and differences until they are no longer useful for understanding the study's information. Doing so allows the researcher to discover the boundaries and the theoretical significance of his or her codes and categories. Then, by way of delimiting the emerging categories, the researcher removes irrelevant properties from the categories and theory as the categories and the theory develop. This delimiting allows the researcher to clarify and solidify the emerging theory and its categories. This delimiting process also allows the researcher to achieve parsimony and a sense of scope concerning the applicability of theory to a range of situations.

During the constant comparative analysis of this dissertation's research, the interviews were first analyzed line by line using the open coding process. During this time, codes were created for each item, concept, and/or definitive statement that seemed

relevant to what was going on within the interview information. Subsequently, as more

and more interviews and open codes were compared and considered, certain open codes

conceptually clumped together into focused codes. Focused codes are conceptual and

theoretical categories that contain various open codes. By conceptually tying together the

various open codes, focused codes elevate the open code terms to concepts. Accordingly,

focused codes then conceptually clump together into broader theoretical

categories/themes.

As mentioned previously, the categories/themes "the environment," "the work,"

and "the individual" emerged from the interview information. Additionally, the unifying

core category of this dissertation's research emerged as "the Sisyphusian predicament."

This chapter provides a discussion of the categories'/themes' definitive characteristics

and their theoretical relevance to the overall theoretical framework. To do so, each

section incorporates quotes from SES members that help contextualize the concepts being

discussed. Additionally, each section explicates the sub-categories, or focused codes,

that contribute to the theoretical relevance of the categories/themes.

The following section of this chapter, section 4.2, defines and explicates the

category/theme of "the environment": the systems, networks, and organizations in which

the interviewees experience their organizational realities, perform their work, and

interpret their socio-historically influenced personal realities. Section 4.3 discusses the

category/theme of "the work." "The work" involves the conditions and activities that

comprise the interviewees' actual day-to-day and overall work. Next, the category/theme

"the individual" focuses on the personal/human condition of the interviewees as public

administrators and as members of the SES. This chapter concludes with section 4.5

explaining the core category/theme's unifying theoretical relevance to this study. "The

Sisyphusian predicament" theoretically and thematically unifies the categories/themes by

way of a metaphorical application of existential concepts within the myth of Sisyphus.

Table 3 displays the inductive organization of the focused codes, the categories/themes,

and the core category/theme described within this chapter.

Table 3: Codes and Categories – The Results of the Grounded Theory Analysis

Focused Code	Category/Theme	Core Category/Theme
• Contextuality • Change and Flux • Issues and Bureaucrats • No End • Politics • Presence of the Public • The Credulity/Incredulity of Universally Objective Understandings and Imperatives	The Environment	The Sisyphusian Predicament
• Boundedness • Bureaucratic Sovereignty • Communication and Exchange • Interconnectedness • Proximity to the Mission	The Work	
• Individual Sovereignty and Relevance • Perseverance, Satisfaction, and Meaning • Responsibility	The Individual	

4.2 The Environment

. . . Programs evolve, there's a need to identify new public needs

associated with these programs, even though they are, for the most part,

very longstanding. We have two new programs – one was started in 2000

and the other in 2004 – and those are, of course, evolving quite rapidly

because they're new and all of the implications in the statutes are still

evolving. But even the programs that are 100 years old are operating in

an environment that's changing, and so you have – I just came from this

meeting where we had discussions about what we ought to be doing –

doing things in that program in dramatically different ways – to have

outcomes that are more desirable than what we have now. So, in fact,

there's a lot – the world out there, the environment that we live in is a

changing world and it imposes new opportunities, new risks, new

problems for us to address.

Within the interview information, "the environment" emerged as an obviously important category. The category/theme "the environment" covers a lot of conceptual and theoretical ground. It addresses the contextual aspects of systems, networks, and organizations in which people work and live and the corresponding effects and influences on agencies, departments, organizations, and the people within them. The marrow of the category/theme lies within its provision of an arena in which other concepts and themes occur. Lastly, and obviously, "the environment" strongly influences the day-to-day and overall experiences and activities of agencies, departments, organizations, and the individuals within them. The purpose of this section is to explicate these aspects of "the

environment" and to define and illustrate the focused codes that compose this category/theme.

As just mentioned, "the environment" refers to the contextually constructed aspects of the systems, networks, and organizations in which the interviewees experience their organizational realities, perform their work, and interpret their socio-historically influenced, and framed, personal realities. For example, the contexts of the different departments' environments and organizational cultures, in combination with one's job, have obvious direct effects on SES members. One interviewee stated that "as an HR administrator, I have to work harder to keep in touch with the department's mission." The organizational environment of the interviewee's department enables or inhibits this interviewee from feeling connected to the departmental mission. Therefore, the interviewee is returning to the interviewee's previous department. "For me, it's easier to feel connected to the mission within the environment and context of DHS – and the types of people, military and former military, that work at DHS."

Obviously, especially in the case of SES members, the political environment within and across departments and organizations affects people's understandings of issues and the work people do in response to issues.

> And what you have here is, in a political environment where, again, you're trading off things, 'I want this, and what will you give me for that?,' policy officials oftentimes will come in and make decisions with no institutional history and no concern about what happens after them. Their immediate task is to promote their agenda, their party, their president, or just do something because they think at the moment that's right thing to do. Our problem is that that very time-bound decision will inevitably set a precedent that we have to live with for a long time. And so we spend a lot of our time talking precedent with policy officials. This is what we did before.

The individual systems', networks', and organizations' environments produce trans-systems, trans-networks, and trans-organizations environments that affect those within them. These effects can be seen in both efforts towards specific, concrete problems and in broad, macro level problems. One interviewee discussed how the interviewee's department hired a contractor to evaluate a particular aspect of the department's work. The interviewee identified this as an example "of reaching out to try to find out what are other people who do what we do in some fashion, how are they addressing these problems, to what extent do our activities make sense in terms of other people's experience and work environment from the outside."

The influences and effects of trans-systems, trans-networks, and trans-organizations environments can also be seen in efforts towards broad, macro level problems. An interviewee suggested that, within the context of social and economic issues, "public administration has a very valuable role to play, but it is not going to solve the problems. It's going to take the people effected by those problems and the global environment and so on. And it's going to take partnerships with private sector, with individuals, with educational institutions." The interviewee concludes the interviewee's idea by stating that, due to environmental and organizational interconnectedness, "no one segment's going to resolve it all."

Not only do these environments affect corporate and individual experience of organizational realities and work, they also influence the ways individuals feel about the work that they do and the contexts in which they do it. All of the interviewees acknowledged the value and significance of what they do in their jobs as public workers. Most of them also pointed out the potential for frustration and annoyance due to the

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environments in which they work. "If you're one that gets easily frustrated because you can't see a lot of progress, then you're going to get frustrated and be dissatisfied for working in the public sector."

An important aspect of "the environment" is that it provides an arena in which other concepts and themes within the interview information occur. It provides, and includes, contexts for the issues, work, and experiences involved in participating in public work. A line from the quote that introduces this section does a nice job of summing up this idea. "The environment that we live in is a changing world and it imposes new opportunities, new risks, new problems for us to address." A different interviewee addresses this idea more specifically and in terms of current, conventional public administration. One's environment causes one to question, "how do you do cost savings? How do you do value management? How do you do cost reductions? I mean, these are problems that everybody across the board faces because we're all in a resource-constrained environment. How do you address those issues?"

Therefore, the aspects of "the environment" have strong influences on both the day-to-day and the overall experiences and activities of the interviewees and their organizations. Several influences are at play within the SES members' environments. In order to address these influences, the rest of this section addresses the focused codes that are involved within the category/theme "the environment." Focused codes that contribute conceptual properties to "the environment" include: "contextuality," "change and flux," "issues and administrative endeavors," "no end," "politics," "presence of the public," and the "credulity/incredulity of universally objective understandings and imperatives." In order to understand how these focused codes contribute to the

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category/theme of "the environment," this category's focused codes are defined and illustrated below. Table 4 outlines the focused codes discussed in this section. Table 5, at the end of section 4.2, quickly lists and defines the focused codes that contribute to "the Environment."

Table 4: Focused Codes within "The Environment"

Focused Codes	Category/Theme
• Contextuality • Change and Flux • Issues and Bureaucrats • No End • Politics • Presence of the Public • The Credulity/Incredulity of Universally Objective Understandings and Imperatives	The Environment

4.2.1 Contextuality

The focused code "contextuality" is an important characteristic of "the environment." In this research, "contextuality" refers to instances in which the interviewees state that their work, experience, feelings, roles, understandings, relationships, degrees of sovereignty, performance, and evaluations are influenced by, and/or are dependent on, the changing characteristics and situations of their various work activities, assignments, surroundings, and resources. The following piece of interview text illustrates this concept well. "My biggest program hasn't had a major amendment since 1974, but constantly, because the context changes, because the circumstances in which people are employed change, because medical issues and determinations become more or less complicated or precise, all of those things go into the decision about coverage and the eligibility on hundreds of different factors, and those are constantly

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changing." An alternative piece of interview text provides a broader example of political context influencing the environment: "well, obviously, when you have a Democratic administration or Democratic Congress, our programs get a whole lot more attention in the sense of expansion and funding. . . . Republican administrations, for the most part, they're not that constraining, but they're pretty much steady state. And, so as administrations come and go, you get that kind of refocusing on our programs here."

The way one sees oneself, one's responsibilities, and one's work depends on the variables involved in creating specific moments in which one exists and epochs through which one exits. One's context seems to significantly affect one's experience and understanding of doing public administration. The effects on one's understanding of participating in public work can occur on a societal level. "You know, as long as – this is a little philosophical here – as long as you have a society who believes that the disadvantaged require some assistance from those who have more, as long as you have an economic system in which there will always be somebody who is less than fully employed – I mean that is just the nature of capitalism – we'll have business here."

The effects of context on one's understanding of participating in public work can occur on a personal level. "Because of competing requirements and changing requirements, I think that's why I said earlier on that it's almost like a never-ending battle, where you wish you could cross a finish line and be done with it. But it's like we used to laugh, 'every time you know the answers, they change all the questions.' It's the same kind of paradigm. If you're one that gets easily frustrated because you can't see a lot of progress, then you're going to get frustrated and be dissatisfied for working in the public sector."

Additionally, the effects of context on one's understanding of participating in

public work can occur on a political level.

> The competition from competing points of view, the political process of
> compromise and giving and taking that goes on here is probably just –
> most citizens probably don't appreciate that process. I mean, most folks
> come at an issue, here's the problem, here's what you need to do to fix it,
> okay. And, then they don't understand how come something that looks so
> clear cut to them gets so muddled and so screwed up when it's turned over
> to the government. And yet, if you were inside the government, you
> would know exactly how we came to point A when you think that the
> answer should have been point B.

4.2.2 Change and Flux

"Change and flux" refers to the ways that interviewees claim that the issues they

face, whether they come from the legislature, the courts, the public, or internal

environments, are in a varying states of change, fluctuation, and modification. Such

points of contention, policies, procedures, regulations, influential actors, socio-political

and historical events come and go, appear and disappear, and/or are defined and

redefined constantly. "From a very broad perspective, the issues are pretty clearly

defined. They're defined for us by legislation, and, more importantly, by the Federal

budget process. On a day-to-day basis, I would describe it as '52 pickup. The issues are

ever-changing and ever-evolving and not so clearly defined."

One can find examples of "change and flux" across departmental contexts.

Within the realm of personnel and human resources, an interviewee stated that

"obviously, having been at the board for 22 years, I worked with several different

administrations and several different chairs, both political parties, and it was always a

constant evolution in terms of that relationship. The world around changes also in terms

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of new government-wide programs impacting on work force management and creating new opportunities for examination, factoring those in."

Instances of "change and flux" also, and obviously, occur within national defense and security contexts. "We're constantly getting new requirements, new directions. In my business, which is information security, the threat is always changing, so today it could be strip kitties, it could be low-level hackers, tomorrow it could be something state-sponsored."

Those involved in services administration departments also manage the "change and flux" that occurs within their working environments. "Definitions are a real issue in government because we build our policies very often based on our definitions. What it meant to eat healthy 20 years ago is not exactly the same as what it means to eat healthy today. So, I guess one of the very exciting and fun things about policy and government is that it is not a steady state. We are learning all the time. And we have to adjust to what we learn."

Sometimes, "change and flux" is easily temporally visible; sometimes, "change and flux" is very slow, and one gradually becomes aware that things have changed. "I could say that when I first came to the agency 26 years ago, if I had to look back then, you know, there are major issues that are pretty much still the same. However, looking back over that same 26 years, in any given time frame, the details that we are most concerned about are constantly changing."

A very illustrative example of slow "change and flux," and gradual awareness to changes, comes from an SES member at the USDA.

Well, speaking of major definitional changes, if you're aware of the history of at least child nutrition programs, they were of consequence of World War II in which you had an awful lot of young kids coming out of the countryside that couldn't pass army physicals for malnutritional or nutrition-related reasons. So the programs were originally intended to improve the health and well-being of our children so that, frankly, they could all grow up and join the army. And, that was primarily about calories. You were just getting people the daily food energy requirements they needed. We have moved away from that now, to where it's not an issue of enough calories; it's too many calories from the kinds of food from which you derive your calories. So our programs have changed over the years from basically food – this has been a pretty interesting definitional change, too – from food assistance or income transfer programs, if you will, to public health nutrition programs. And, that shift has happened in really big time in the last 25 years. And you have members of the school food service community who came into the program 25 years ago who still think of the program as we got to feed our kids because they're hungry and they're malnourished, in [the old] sense. With the new emphasis on, it's not so much how much they eat, it's on what they eat and the proper mix of foods and making sure that the long-term consequences of bad diet are avoided. It's been pretty interesting.

Lastly, instances of solutions creating problems and instances of unintended consequences illustrate the "change and flux" within public administration. Adverse interactions amongst policies and unforeseen outcomes of administering policies create situations in which administrators face "change and flux" within their work and the issues towards which they work. These events can disrupt plans, strategies, and goals. They provide new and varying situations for administrators to manage. An SES member involved in personnel administration stated that "any time you make a change in terms of people management, you make a change in one area, it has a potential to impact, for the better or not, other parts of work force management." Therefore, the interviewee went on to caution that "we had to be mindful that a couple years from now we need to go back and take a look to see if the changes we recommended were really working out as we

intended. Or, have there been some problems created that were not expected, and do we need to try to address that?"

4.2.3 Issues and Administrative Endeavors

"Issues and administrative endeavors" refers to the ways in which the interviewees expressed the effects of organizational, political, and social issues on the ways that they experience and perform their work. Such effects involve what the SES members do and the contexts in which they work. For example, on interviewee provided a general example of how organizational, political, and social issues can affect one's work and experience. "Like I said, public problems never have a final solution. There comes a point where someone says 'you've done enough' or 'we're not interested in that problem' or 'the money to deal with that problem is gone.' In which case, the problem can linger on, but you're just not going to worry about." Similarly, another interviewee brought up the ongoing-ness aspect of issues and administrative endeavors. "You really have to take a look at what it is you're doing and the benefit that the public forum is going to have out of your efforts and what it is you're trying to do. The challenge is that it's always changing, and, I mean, there are new technologies, there are new issues of problems, there are new regulations and laws. And those things kind of keep it as a moving target." Lastly, there's an obvious social element at play within "issues and administrative endeavors." "In public administration, you're dealing with people, and so, I think you have to be pretty open to a variety of ideas about a problem, and how it can be approached, how it can be dealt with."

The issues facing administrators and the impact of the issues on the experience

and work of the administrators vary according to who's defining the issues and how the

issues are defined. Within public administrative work, there is a multiplicity of actors

involved in identifying, defining, and measuring issues. "Some of them are based around

Federal regulation requirements and others are based around operational needs and

requirements." Meanwhile, "some are determined in statute, some are determined by the

science, some are determined by research, and some are determined by the public."

Ultimately,

> The definition of those issues arises from anyone who has access to the
> political apparatus of the department, and so it's kind of wide open. This
> is, after all, the public business. So issues can be defined for us by John Q.
> Public; they can be defined for us by industry and special interest groups.
> They can be defined by individual Congressmen. They can be defined by
> interest and advocacy groups, and they can be defined by the political
> leadership of the department itself, depending on what agenda they come
> in to deal with in their time in office, which is always limited.

In addition to different sources providing different issues, a particular issue can

have multiple definitions based on the parties interested in the issue. "Different people

define issues differently, which creates more problems." This last statement segues into

the next aspect of "issues and administrative endeavors." Issue definitions and

measurements involve contestable degrees of subjectivity and/or objectivity.

The degree of subjectivity and/or objectivity of issue definitions and/or

measurements are disputable. The SES members in this dissertation's research expressed

the difficulty of, or impossibility of, obtaining objectivity within issue definitions and

ways of measuring work towards issues. "Measures in this agency, and I think in the

public sector in general, as a way of guiding your priorities and your resource

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investments are difficult to come by." Instead, the SES members typically pointed out

the utility and existence of "systematic" means rather than "objective" means. While

describing processes an interviewee's department had in place for detecting potentially

relevant issues to address and for evaluating the department's work towards existing

issues, the interviewee confessed, "So, again, I wouldn't say they're objective. I would

say they're systematic processes, and there's a difference. . . . But it's at least

systematic."

Similarly to the notion of "systematic" acting as a valid surrogate for "objective,"

budgets – themselves political documents – also provide a sense of objectivity to SES

members' work.

> The budget is an exemption, although that in itself is a political document.
> It's just that when you're dealing with dollars, that's at least an objective
> measure of where the Congress intends for you to spend your time and
> effort. 'Here are the issues we want you to focus on and here are the
> issues we're not so interested in you focusing on.' That's very clearly
> established by budget priorities. Day-to-day, it's pretty much political.

Lastly, the duration of the organizational and political issues' relevance and/or

attention, and the constant replacing of one issue for another, also affect the ways that

SES members experience and perform their work. An SES member from the USDA

pointed out that "there are new issues facing the USDA: Pandemic issues are creating

new communities of interests. There's concern for terrorists harming the food supply –

people aren't really paying attention to this." This provides a rather illustrative example

of the topic at hand. Since the interview with this particular SES member occurred, the

notion of pandemics has fallen far from the general public's and the media's radar

screens. The same could be said regarding current concern for terrorists attacking America's food supplies.

On a more mundane level, organizational issues coming and going are more pertinent to the day-to-day experience and work of public administrators. Issue attention spans decrease with time and awareness, making room for new organizational interests and issues. "It was like, okay, we've got the basics down here, we've established some base lines, we'll kind of do some background monitoring, but we're not going to do major studies on this. There are other topics now. Things have evolved. It's time to stop devoting resources to this topic and because there's others where there's going to be greater benefit."

4.2.4 No End

"No end" refers to instances in which the interviewees perceive and express various types of never-endingness within their work. Such never-endingness exists on large, macro levels: "Problems are the nature of life. And the notion that all problems are only – in my view, they're only resolved when you cease breathing." It also appears within one's day-to-day work experience, as well: "We just tie ourselves up trying to resolve questions, and these letters go back and forth and get rewritten literally hundreds of times. . . And there's that sense that you never actually ever produce anything, you just recycle and constantly charge up the hill trying to get the right words down on a piece of paper, to no effect and to no greater benefit to the American public."

Instances of "no end" include perceptions regarding the ways in which the work of government will never be finished. There will always be work to do. "Nothing stays

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static. It's not 'we're going to create the perfect system and structure here and it's going to operate indefinitely at an extremely high level.' It's life. You have to constantly take care of your changing circumstances." The changing circumstances mentioned in this quote can come from both inside and outside of government. The interviewee continued, "and, when you're working within public administration, within government, and you're creating new programs, policies, what have you, you're constantly striving to either improve upon the current circumstance, or, if you've hit upon something that's working well, you want to try to figure out, 'well, how do we maintain that; how do we make sure that this now doesn't fall apart as other things around it change?'"

Sometimes, forces external to government result in the never-endingness of public work. An easy example is the existence of hunger in America. "I think there are some things that are steady and constant. I mean, I would like to think that we could eliminate hunger completely, but hunger is something that is out there and we are still a ways away from being able to address it fully and completely."

Lastly, "no end" also refers to the ways in which issues will always arise from somewhere, the ways in which contexts and issues will always be changing, and the ways in which solutions create problems. These three concepts ensure that public work will remain devoid of finish lines. "And clearly, there's no end to our – there's no end date to the problems. We find new problems. You solve one; you create another one. You have to go pick up and realign your activities. So, in that sense, the sort of endless task is clear."

4.2.5 Politics

The collapse of the politics/administration dichotomy displayed the existence of politics within administration long ago. "Politics" in this dissertation refers to the extents to which the interviewees claimed to experience the influence of politics within the requirements of their work, the ways they performed their work, what their work addressed, and their experiences of their work. "Politics" predominantly refers to organizational politics; however, due to the circumstances of the SES, "politics" can also include the effect of political wrangling within Congress and whichever Administration is in office. SES members have particularly interesting positions with regard to the effects of "politics" on their work and experience. "SES obviously lives at the interface of the political and the career service. What you're hearing from me is partly my particular emphasis because I really care about the SES. I really want to focus on what we can accomplish, even if there's no agreement at the political level." This interviewee goes on to describe the effect of this political contentiousness on the work of both policymakers and administrators. "As I was saying just now, I believe there's a tremendous amount of non-agreement at the political level. . . . There's a tremendous amount of fractiousness and just butting heads that doesn't accomplish anything for anybody. So it's not even a matter of picking the wrong [policy] targets and goals. It's just knowing."

The presence of political disagreement and butting of heads brings up the potential utility of constructing some sorts of compromises within the political contexts of public work. "That's why this is so much a political organization. If you talk about politics as kind of the consensus building or trading back/trading off one opportunity for

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something that is of greater value to you, that basic political process is the way we do almost everything here." Another interviewee adds that part of the difficulty of working and compromising within political contexts is that "different people define problems differently, which creates more problems." An interviewee from a different department voiced an equivalent idea. The interviewee stated that while "looking at any particular goal or value that you're trying to pursue, there are an infinite number of problems that can be identified. And what government is about is trying to figure out which are the most critical ones and doing something to address those."

Every interviewee stated that an aspect of trying to build compromises is the idea that macro-level agreement is much easier to create than micro-level agreement. For example, "there is more disagreement in deciding what to do than what to address. Implementation is the key here. Key stakeholders agreed on a policy but not on implementation." The issue of implementation is obviously critical within a public administration context.

Due to the obvious interaction between politics and administration within public bureaucratic work, the effects of "politics" on implementation and other administrative endeavors is not just "downward" onto administrators. The influence of politics within one's work and experience also manifests itself in the ways in which administrators can influence policy. "As good bureaucrats, your job is to implement the policy decisions of the political appointees of the given department. But as a bureaucrat with a longer perspective of the agency business, you have tremendous influence on the shape and definition of issues that the political appointees consider. So you do have some influence. It's not just simply a matter of saluting and saying 'yes, ma'am,' 'yes, sir.'"

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As previously mentioned, SES members' bureaucratic positions are highly charged with politics. This idea both emerged from the interviews and was generally understood previous to the interviews. However, the political context of the SES involves not only influence between policymakers and administrators but also the administrators' public images and their interpretation of policy. With regard to administrators' public images, SES members' politically charged positions cause some SES members to caution that "one has to be aware of how what you say in a public setting would be interpreted. In my job, I am aware of the politics, and I have to be guarded." Others point out how a lack of public awareness regarding the ways government functions politically and administratively harms administrators' public images. "Oftentimes, we get accused of being foot draggers, naysayers, what have you, but it's all because decisions that are made today for expediency or political reasons have long-lived consequences that we need to be mindful of – or, oftentimes, become tied to." Therefore, in the midst of political battles and administrative efforts to reconcile differences and encourage helpful governmental actions, some SES members feel as though their positive efforts and accomplishments go unnoticed by the public. Their efforts and the difficulty of their efforts "doesn't get a lot of attention. I think the public as a whole doesn't see that. They see all the noise and the political wrangling and the lack of productivity in terms of the big issues because there's some huge amount of disagreement."

In addition to having varying degrees of political influence on policymaking, SES members, and bureaucrats in general, deal with politics within their interpretation of policy that they are in charge of administering. "Obviously, we live in a political world.

Even though we have statutes that layout the requirements for, in our case, delivering benefits to certain eligible individuals, they're subject to interpretation. They're subject to political pressure – sort of one way or another in certain areas – sensitivities about groups of people who are receiving the benefits. So, there's a wide degree of political involvement in what we do on a daily basis."

Within the interviews, the idea emerged that politics also proves to be a way of identifying issues, defining issues, determining what to do about issues, and evaluating work performed on issues. Issue identification and issue definition appeared to be interrelated. In order to identify an issue, parties involved had to have some general understanding of whatever it was that they were trying to identify. The social and political contexts in which such identification and definition takes place makes this activity challenging. "In what I do, there are no absolutes. Unfortunately, there are so many variations and so many nuances and exceptions to the rule that I can't say it's either black or white or yes or no or true or false."

Even if there is a general understanding of an issue being addressed, the degree of issue definition required to facilitate determining what to do is frequently politically difficult. For example, "we might say that, yep, hunger's a problem. But getting back to the point I made earlier, how someone defines who's hungry and what you should do about that gets really mushy." Adding to the problem of operationalizing "mushy" definitions is the number of competing and aligning parties involved in the issue defining process. "Again, given that you have a whole bunch of interest groups and advocacy groups and business interests that are affected by issues of who is hungry, then you get a lot of different definitions of what that problem is, and that leads to mushiness."

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Naturally, the arguments around how to accurately and appropriately define an

issue can go on indefinitely, depending on who participates in the defining process,

whose ideas gain credibility, and whose are pushed aside to fight on the sidelines.

However, even with a generally bounded issue definition, politics continues to play a role

in determining what to do about the issue at hand.

> I think the practicality is, whatever the public problem may be – safety,
> health, education – the practicality maybe that you're only going to get
> support, whether it's public support, funding, the political will, around a
> certain set of proposed solutions or options. So, I think it's probably on
> one level there are inexhaustible options. But from a practical point of
> view, sometimes you have to figure out here's the universe because we
> can't debate this for 20, 30 years. Let's figure out maybe a dozen really
> distinguishable proposals – and let's put those on the table because we can
> create more, but it's not going to help, it's not going to move us forward.
> We've got to define what we're going to debate and try to get some
> agreement around those. We've got to decide what we're going to try to
> reach agreement on, and this is our universe because we just, from a
> practical point of view, we can't debate this endlessly – well, we could,
> but public health isn't going to improve.

Program evaluation proves to be fertile ground for political contentiousness and

political reality-construction. The ways in which interested parties go about observing,

measuring, analyzing, and evaluating things can be very political – intentionally or

unintentionally. An example of the politics of evaluation that occurred within the

interviews can be seen by way of the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB)

Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART).

> There's something called the Program Assessment Rating Tool – that's
> what PART stands for. These folks attempt to – that's a method for them
> to – sort of try to establish what might be called an objective or a
> consistent kind of measuring against all the programs in government. As I
> said, I don't denigrate the notion of trying. I think the idea there is a
> reasonable one. The problem is, of course, in many aspects, they don't
> have the insight and knowledge, and they aren't able to appreciate the
> creativity in regards. And, frankly, some of the programs where they say

'results not demonstrated,' which means in their view that the agency hasn't put together measures that, in fact, get at – that are even adequate to give somebody a good guess – as to whether it's working or not. In a lot of cases that's right, because the agencies just haven't done it. And some cases, consciously, [the agencies] have decided they don't want to do it. But in cases – in my programs, I've gotten 'adequate' rating, and I've gotten the next higher rating of 'moderately effective.' But two things go on: one is the lack of understanding in many respects, so that, when we go through their grid of questions, they oftentimes don't give credit for things that I think they should. I think they don't understand. There's like 1,200 or so programs that are covered by [PART], and there's 600 people or 500 or something at OMB, that includes everybody, including the dishwashers; so, they don't have enough people to really do this. But the other neat thing is they also bring to bear their own political concerns. So some programs – I have some programs that are written and rated low because the OMB doesn't like that program and would like to get rid of it. From my perspective, that's not a valid criterion to use. They'll argue that that's appropriate, that they should be looking at these programs that, quote/unquote, "Congress" has created and pick and choose among the ones that they think are effective and ineffective. And, when you're talking about some programs that make sense, I think in the case of you have 26 different training programs with the department of labor, and some of them can shout – they can demonstrate – that the training works, and people end up getting into jobs and making substantially higher earnings than they have – there's some kind of objective criteria. And others, there's just no – the showing isn't there. But, those people actually get to some new level of life that justifies the millions and billions of dollars they're spending. So, in some respects, I don't think that's wrong. So even though I'm sure the managers of some of those programs that may not show up as being successful are very happy about it because they're working really hard to accomplish something. But, in other cases, I think there's just this – OMB has a particular problematic bent against something, they don't like it, and so the scores become something that other people can argue about.

Additionally, the focused code of "politics" addresses the epistemological aspects of politics in which competing politics and rationalities fight to determine the organizational, governmental, and societal realities in which interviewees' work and in which their experiences takes place. For example, already in this discussion of "politics" one has seen how identifying who is hungry is politically determined, identifying who's

eligible for assistance is politically determined, and identifying who is performing well or not is politically determined. This has taken place by way of recognizing the politics involved in identifying issues, defining issues, determining what to do about issues, interpreting policy, administering policy, and evaluating work performed on issues.

Amidst the competing politics and rationalities, one interviewee pointed out that "we're out here in this world, in effect uncertain, fluid. You got to fight and construct for every piece of social agreement that you can find. And, that feels pretty scary to a lot of people, and certainly it makes it harder, in many respects. Everything becomes more contentious in the public's sphere." Similar ideas are shared across the interviews. All of the interviewees acknowledged something along the lines of "there are different perceptions, but it's kind of a natural phenomenon. You know what you know, and you don't know what you don't." "Perspective: you know, you see things from where you sit." And, "different groups who have an interest in the issue define them differently." Accordingly, "that's why I think it's important that you talk to each other."

4.2.6 Presence of the Public

Presence of the public refers to the ways in which, and the degrees to which, the interviewees' were aware of public issues, needs, opinions, well-being, and rights within both the day-to-day and the overall practice of their administrative work. All of the interviewees acknowledged that "the public is who we work for." Accordingly, "part of being in public service is being open to issues that affect the population that you are obligated to serve." Therefore, with regard to developing policy and administering policy, "if you aren't looking at the client when you're doing it, then you don't know what

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you're doing." Based on SES members' focus on the citizens that they serve and being aware of the political environment in which they work to serve the public, SES members aren't always on the side of government. One interviewee pointed out that "I don't always agree with the government's interpretation of the public interest." Nevertheless, in the overall scheme of things, the interviewees recognized that they

> Perform a valuable public service, that people do depend on the kinds of programs that we have and we owe them our time, and – this may sound a little corny, but some of us feel this way – that in the end of the day, we can go home and feel that there are a whole lot of American families who are better off for what we do here than would be the case if we just said 'what the hell? It's a frustrating environment; let's quit and go home and play golf.'

The roles and expectations that result from the interviewees' SES positions caused them to experience various perceived oughts aimed towards serving and protecting the public. The preeminent imperative across the interviews was that "government needs to protect the public good." The importance of serving within the government was identified by one interviewee stating that "there is a split between market responses and the public interest. The market won't necessarily take care of everything." Most of the perceived oughts identified by the SES members involved acting as "stewards of the public interest, spirit, and letter of the law – as it was intended. I call fulfilling this role as fulfilling public trust."

Lastly, the interviews included various difficulties that resulted from the differences between public and governmental understandings of public issues and activities toward such issues. These difficulties and differences could be seen in expressions such as "the public doesn't know what the government does and what the issues are." "The public is not very aware of administration. They are more aware of

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politics. Even then, not so much." And, "I think it's difficult for the average citizen to get a really accurate sense of how things are working in government, in terms of programs, policies and outcomes."

One SES member summed up the differences and difficulties in an interesting way. The interviewee stated that "I put on my trousers just like anyone else. So, the fact that I'm in the government doesn't mean that I can't see things the way John Q. Citizen sees them." However, the interviewee then went on to address why some of the misunderstandings that exist between those within government and those outside of government exist. "My ability to deal with them as John Q. Citizen might want me to deal with them might be constrained by my organizational position. But I don't know that we as bureaucrats, at any level, are so insulated from the rest of the world that we can't see what's going on. It's just our ability to do something about that is constrained."

Despite any of these differences and difficulties, the SES members see value in what they do for the public. "Most people wouldn't know the number of – one in five Americans at some point is the beneficiary of one or more of our programs. They may not know who it is that's behind the green screen cranking this stuff out. But at the end of the day, we do have, I think, a profound effect on the lives of lots of folks even though they don't recognize us."

4.2.7 The Credulity/Incredulity of Universally Objective Understandings and Imperatives

"The credulity/incredulity of universally objective understandings and imperatives" refers to the ways in which interviewees contemplate and employ ideas on universal imperatives and objectivity. Frequently, interviewees flip-flop between

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identifying issues, laws, truths, measures, approaches, evaluations, and ideas as being universally objective items or contextually subjective items. Some identify the presence and utility of universal imperatives, and then they turn around and discuss the subjectivity and contextuality of items. On the other hand, some interviewees claim that there are no objective universals, and then, they turn around and discuss an item as an objective universal. Rarely, if ever, do any interviewees take an epistemological side and stay with it. Therefore, the differences/disagreements between interviewees and within interviewees justify this dichotomous focused code – while drawing attention to the singularity of the interesting issue of the individual interviewees holding competing understandings of, and approaches to, the world.

Typically, within the interviews, interviewees who acknowledged universal truths cited pillars of the conventional public administrative ethos: being a good steward of the public good and trust, including the tax-payers' dollars, and efficiency. Additionally, the notion of the law as a universal truth appeared in many interviews. One interviewee proclaimed that "when it comes to universal truths, the laws are the universal truths to bureaucrats." That interviewee continued with "it doesn't matter if the law is wrong. It's the law." Another interviewee worded a comparable sentiment in a way that was more indicative of the other SES members' understandings of the law as some sort of universal. The interviewee said, "Universal truths or principles? Well, if the legislation's enacted, that's – you need to do what the law requires you to do."

As they discussed situations involving identifying issues, defining issues, determining responses to issues, implementing policy, and evaluating policy, the SES members both addressed the difficulty of identifying universally objective approaches

and the absence of any universally objective approaches concerning public work. As mentioned previously in this section, definitions are tricky, political things. An SES member illustrates this by stating that "recently, there has been concern that you cannot objectively measure hunger. You can, though, get a better sense of something called food insecurity. So there was a major attempt to restructure kind of what we dealt with as dealing with problems of hunger to dealings with problems of food insecurity." Regarding the absence of any universally objective approaches, one interviewee phrased it as "universal truth sort of implies a notion of natural law or some imbedded principles that we can't really deviate from. Aside from gravity, such as that, I think when you're in the public sphere, you're out of the universal objective."

In addition to creating definitions, the interviewees identified means for objectively determining what to do about public issues as contentious, regardless of whether or not individual interviewees claimed to believe in universally objective understandings.

> Obviously, I think the public sphere, and basically, just by talking about the public sphere you're talking about a subjective, maybe a mutually – maybe an organizational intersubjective kind of relationship where people are trying to determine where the society should be going or what the value to the society is. So, in that sense, the notion of sort of ironclad, 'okay, this is the program; here are our measures; this tells me that I'm doing the right thing' is sort of by definition not available.

Efforts to create measures for evaluating issues and responses to issues suffer similarly. As a result of not having universal objectives to fall back on "you struggle to pick out ways to try to make some kind of sense and to have some kind of at least partially objective measures, which is the creativity that I mentioned before. But I don't see that as sort of stumbling upon the measure that is etched in stone somewhere out there

in the universe. You put it in place and everything's good. Well, you know, that's not the way life is."

Lastly, part of the interviewees' tendency to flip-flop between accepting and not accepting universally objective approaches might result from the complexities of their work, if not from the complexities of their own epistemologies. For example, as an interviewee reflected on an interview question, the interviewee said, "Are there objective universal ways of understanding public needs? There are. They're not the only ways of understanding public needs." The interviewee then attempted to blend objectivism and subjectivism. "So, yes, I think you do have to look at it from kind of an objective and universal, but then you have to marry that with but how does it subjectively operationalize, how does it actually work at the individual level."

Now that this section has defined and described the category/theme "the environment," along with its multiple focused codes (see table 5), the following section does the same with the next category/theme, "the work."

Table 5: Defining the Focused Codes within "The Environment"

Focused Code	Definition
Contextuality	"Contextuality" refers to instances in which the interviewees state that their work, experience, feelings, roles, understandings, relationships, degrees of sovereignty, performance, and evaluations are influenced by, and/or are dependent on, the changing characteristics and situations of their various work activities, assignments, surroundings, and resources. One's context seems to significantly affect one's experience and understanding of doing public administration.
Change and Flux	"Change and flux" refers to the ways that interviewees claim that the issues they face, whether they come form the legislature, the courts, the public, or internal environments, are in a varying states of change, fluctuation, and modification. Such issues come and go, appear and disappear, and/or are defined and redefined constantly. Sometimes, this

	evolution and change is easily temporally visible; sometimes, this evolution and change is very slow, and one day one suddenly becomes aware that things have changed. Additionally, instances of solutions creating problems and of unintended consequences illustrate the evolution and change within public administration.
Issues and Bureaucrats	"Issues and bureaucratic endeavors" refers to the ways in which the interviewees expressed the effects of organizational and political issues on the ways that they experience and perform their work. The issues facing administrators and the impact of the issues on the experience and work of the administrators vary according to who's defining the issues, how the issues are defined, the degree of subjectivity and/or objectivity of the issues definitions and/or measurements, the duration of the issues' relevance and/or attention, and the constant replacing of one issue for another.
No End	"No end" refers to instances in which the interviewees perceive and express various types of never-endingness within their work. These instances include perceptions regarding the ways in which the work of government will never be finished, the ways in which issues will always arise from somewhere, the ways in which contexts and issues will always be changing, and the ways in which solutions create problems.
Politics	"Politics" refers to the extents to which the interviewees claimed to experience the influence of politics within the requirements of their work, the ways they performed their work, what their work addressed, and their experiences of their work. As SES members, their bureaucratic positions are highly charged with politics. This emerges from the interviews. Politics proves to be a way of identifying issues, defining issues, determining what to do about issues, and evaluating work performed on issues. Additionally, the focused code of politics addresses the epistemological aspects of politics in which competing politics and rationalities fight to determine the organizational, governmental, and societal realities in which interviewees' work and in which their experiences takes place.
Presence of the Public	"Presence of the public" refers to the ways in which, and the degrees to which, the interviewees' were aware of public issues, needs, opinions, well-being, and rights within both the day-to-day and the overall practice of their administrative work. The roles and expectations that result from the interviewees' SES positions caused them to experience various perceived oughts aimed towards serving and protecting the public and various difficulties that resulted

	from the differences between public sector and governmental understandings of issues and activities toward such issues.
The Credulity/Incredulity of Universally Objective Understandings and Imperatives	"The credulity/incredulity of objective understandings and imperatives" refers to the ways in which interviewees contemplate and employ ideas on universal imperatives and objectivity. Frequently, interviewees flip-flip between identifying issues, laws, truths, measures, approaches, evaluations, and ideas as being objectively universal items or subjectively contextual items. Some identify the presence and utility of universal imperatives, and then they turn around and discuss the subjectivity and contextuality of items. On the other hand, some interviewees claim that there are no objective universals, and then they turn around discuss an item as an objective universal. Rarely, if ever, do any interviewees take an epistemological side and stay with it. Therefore, the differences/disagreements between interviewees and within interviewees justifies this dichotomous focused code – while drawing attention to the singularity of the interesting issue of the individual interviewees holding competing understandings of and approaches to the world.

4.3 The Work

The work that we did was within the decided parameters. We were

authorized by an act of Congress to do a certain amount of work. They

had established a set of merit principles and a set of primitive personnel

practices, and that was our universe. Within that defined universe that

was in the parameters set by Congress, and interpreted by our political

leadership at the board, and within the executive branch, more broadly,

within those parameters, we proceeded in a very rational basis. We

developed our own methodology, as I described earlier, in deciding

"What are we going to study? We have limited resources, how are we

going to study it? Where do we provide the greatest return on

investment? And how can we best accomplish the mission given to us by

Congress as interpreted by the Administration?"

Within the interview information, the category/theme "the work" emerged as a

way for organizing, and for referring to, the conditions and activities involved in the

interviewees' day-to-day and overall work. The conditions in which one performs one's

work activities, and the work activities themselves, significantly influence the problem

recognition, decision making, and activity inherent in one's work. Therefore, the

conditions in which one works shape one's activities, and, in turn, one's activities shape

the conditions in which one works. The purpose of this section is to explicate these

aspects of "the work" and to define and illustrate the focused codes that compose this

category/theme.

The primary substance of "the work" addresses the character of administrative and bureaucratic undertakings. It summarizes and describes what it is to practice and to experience public administration. A strong awareness of being bound by legislative requirements, legislated budgets, precedent, others' and one's own past and current decisions/activities, and even the finitude of personkind emerged from the interviews as an important characteristic of "the work." An SES member from the USDA discussed the SES member's "limits of authority" regarding the ways the interviewee was allowed to perform the interviewee's job. With regard to the interviewee's permissible options and activities, the interviewee said, "It's up to Congress." Similarly, another interviewee declared that "There's nothing that we do proactively." An SES member from DOL stated, "Some of the programs shouldn't work the way they do at all, but I don't have a control over that. I think that the overall outlines are set by Congress."

Certainly, one's work conditions and tasks influence one's degree of boundedness. "In the administrative body, it's an ongoing creative tension. And, that's influenced by external factors, things as basic as how much funding do I have this year? How many people do I have? And, that's obviously related to funding as well. What are the practical options?" The same interviewee also explained, "I was often largely driven by how can I have the greatest impact with the resources that I had available – so doing the greatest good, if you will. And, then, at some point, you've got to make a decision and move on."

With regard to the binds of human finitude, one interview expressed, "If we had a perfect view, we could kind of step out into the universe and look from 30,000 feet or three million miles and see all the interrelationships and have this answer, a completely

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omniscient understanding of what's going on. Then, we wouldn't make all these mistakes, but that's not who we are. We are limited individuals operating in a lot of uncertainty."

However, "the work" also addresses ways in which one can manage to create and to maintain influence and free-will through abbreviated, truncated, or bounded sovereignty, despite one's work conditions and activities. An SES member from the MSPB explained how the interviewee approached "the work" of public administration. The interviewee asked, "What am I doing to change things around me that I can change, and how does that connect to the bigger picture, and how well do these little cogs get together to make this machine move?" Another interviewee claimed, "Just simply by basis of your institutional position, you have an opportunity to influence policy that's made by policy officials."

"The work" also confronts communicative issues and the relevance of administrators' work overlapping and interacting with other departments' and/or agencies' work. Such work occurring in the wake of others' work complicates individual administrators' work. "The world around changes also in terms of new government-wide programs impacting on work force management and creating new opportunities for examination. But day-to-day, I mean, I had responsibility for a staff, needing to make sure that they were being well utilized." Similarly, with "different hiring authorities, agencies are saying 'you've made it way too complicated in the different hiring authorities, and the procedural requirements that go with those. Can't you just let us go out there, find good people and hire them?' And, so we debate over what types of hiring authorities and new authorities are being created, old authorities being dropped."

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Accordingly, the SES members interviewed explain that, due to the interconnectedness of public work, "We get a lot of inputs from the outside world and that requires us to change."

Therefore, the aspects of "the work" have strong influences on the day-to-day experiences and activities of the interviewees and their organizations. SES members face several issues within their work conditions and activities. In order to address these issues, the rest of this section addresses the focused codes within the category/theme "the work." Focused codes that contribute to this category include: "boundedness," "bureaucratic sovereignty," "interconnectedness," "proximity to the mission," and "communication and exchange." In order to understand how these focused codes contribute to the category/theme of "the work," this category's focused codes are defined and illustrated below. Table 6 outlines the focused codes discussed in this section. Table 7, at the end of section 4.3, quickly lists and defines the focused codes that contribute to "the Work."

Table 6: Focused Codes within "The Work"

Focused Codes	Category/Theme
• Boundedness • Bureaucratic Sovereignty • Communication and Exchange • Interconnectedness • Proximity to the Mission	The Work

4.3.1 Boundedness

"Boundedness" refers to limits on action, awareness, choice, options, position, opinions, sovereignty, etc. that appear within the interviewees statements. It is a focused code for actions, situations, feelings, and/or statements voiced/discussed by interviewees

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in which the individual and/or the situation has anywhere from a small to a large degree of external determinance. One of the easiest, most upfront circumstances to witness "boundedness" at play within the interviews is within bureaucratic action and policy termination.

As administrators, the SES members pointed out that the White House, Congress, and political appointees identified and bounded their activities and their policies. Within the cases of the HR interviewees, "Laws for hiring come from somewhere else. They come from OPM and Congress." HR SES members had to follow the prescribed laws for hiring, regardless of what they thought to be best and most effective for their organizations. SES members in non-HR positions identified how their actions and policies came from outside as well. Interviewees also identified how the budget determined their actions and policies. One interviewee discussed how Congress and appointees would say, "'Here are the issues we want you to focus on, and here are the issues we're not so interested in you focusing on.' That's very clearly established by budget priorities."

When it comes to terminating policies and programs, all of the interviewees claimed that termination decisions came from their superiors and from the budget. When asked how one's department or agency determined when it was time to end a program, one SES member responded, "Principally, we use two criteria for that. One, somebody tells us to stop, 'Don't do this anymore;' or two, we don't have any resources to deal with it. Again, the sharp edge of the budget razor, if you will. That really will be a delimiter. Otherwise, we can dribble on and on and on." Interestingly, another SES member

identified litigation as another determination of when to terminate a program. "When to terminate a program is decided from above: political decisions and litigation."

Less obvious than the "boundedness" regarding action and policy/program termination, but possibly much more interesting, is "boundedness" within intelligence and capacity. This "boundedness" is present within one interviewee's simple and accurate observation that "You know what you know, and you don't know what you don't." Such a line plays out all the time within administrative efforts, and in human endeavors in general.

> I just feel that that's just what it is to be human; we have imperfect knowledge of our environment. We certainly don't know what's in the mind and intentions of even our own employees in this world, but certainly of the rest of the human group that we're working with. And, the result of that is uncertainty. And, the best you can do in those circumstances is just keep – in my view – is to keep plugging away and try to correct obvious errors where you see them, and where you can determine that you've gone astray, you go back to another thing.

Bounded intelligence and resources create contexts in which one can perform one's work. "Our abilities are limited by the fact that we are limited creatures, and, so, we can do things within a context and only in terms of some sort of shared understanding of a value structure that people are seeking to achieve. And, within that, we can accomplish something. You can more or less approximate positive goals. In my view, that's all you can hope for."

One interviewee provided an example of bounded intelligence and capacity within OMB. The interviewee, whose programs are evaluated by OMB's PART, claimed that some of the programs' PART evaluations were the result of OMB's "boundedness."

> In my programs, I've gotten 'adequate' rating and I've gotten the next higher rating of 'moderately effective.' But two things go on: one is the

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lack of understanding in many respects, so that when we go through their grid of questions, they oftentimes don't give credit for things that I think they should. I think they don't understand. There's like 1200 or so programs that are covered by this, and there's 600 people or 500 or something at OMB – that includes everybody, including the dishwashers. So, they don't have enough people to really do this.

"Boundedness" is also present in the ways in which administrative decision making and activity occurs within the wake of previous decisions and activities. Working within the wake of others' work, and one's previous work, frames one's alternatives, resources, and means of understanding. The interconnectedness of public policies, resources, and people involved add to this "boundedness." Effects in various aspects of the various systems in turn affect other aspects of the various systems. Section 4.3.3 distinctly addresses the focused code of "interconnectedness." However, this section quickly addresses the concept of interconnectedness due to the ways in which it manifests itself within the concept of "boundedness."

An interviewee from the USDA illustrates the ideas of interconnectedness and working within the wake of previous and/or other activities succinctly. "I find that the work I do occurs in the wake of what I've done in the past. Because in government nothing stands all by itself. Now, we are set up, in large part, in silos, but even as we set up in our silos, we end up affecting others. We may be set up in silos but people aren't. People's lives are not siloed into hunger and health and work and housing."

A different SES member identified something similar, but the interviewee focused more on the precedent of previous policies and activities rather than obvious interconnectedness. "Obviously, in our position here as the career folks, you will always be in the wake of some policy official's decisions. There is not an easy way necessarily

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for us to get out of that wake. Even when they leave and a new set of folks come on, certain things get put into motion that you have to deal with. You just can't say, well, they're gone, we're going this way." During a different part of the interview with this interviewee, the interviewee states that the "boundedness" that results from previous contextual decisions is something that the interviewee tries hard to match to the department's current and future contexts. "Our problem is that every time-bound decision will inevitably set a precedent that we have to live with for a long time. And, so we spend a lot of our time talking precedent with policy officials. If you do this, this is what it's going to mean in light of previous decision-making and here's the consequences for us down the road."

Lastly, the issue of "boundedness" also emerged within the interviewees' expressions of personal experience of working within their departments. One SES member expressed the SES member's personal experience of "boundedness" by stating that "I all the time feel trapped by the law." This statement obviously plays itself out in the SES members' work. "Sometimes we make things more complicated. We overanalyze. However, we overanalyze in order to not break regulations. We come up with a lot in order to avoid penalties." Another SES member agreed. "It's not like there's a lot of independent decision on our part. . . . One of the things that's a real career shortener here is if the career civil service is viewed as too assertive, too aggressive, too independent, that gets you sidetracked very quickly."

However, having identified the "boundedness" within the context, work, and experience of public work, this concept of "boundedness" doesn't suggest determinism or totalitarian, deterministic systems. It acknowledges truncated free-will, abbreviated

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sovereignty, and finite capacities. Despite one's "boundedness," SES members acknowledged that they had abbreviated abilities to use their creativity within a potentially deterministic system. "If the legislation's enacted, you need to do what the law requires you to do. If you are, though, in the business of developing legislation, and we do that on occasion, even though we're the executive branch, we oftentimes will put together legislative initiatives and try to find Congressional sponsors." Other SES members expressed similar ideas, even if their abbreviated sovereignty was more constrained. "I was often largely driven by 'How can I have the greatest impact with the resources that I had available?' So, doing the greatest good, if you will. And, then, at some point, you've got to make a decision and move on to the next stage which is, 'Okay, look, let's get an agreement from our board members and then let's go and do these studies.'"

Ultimately, in the midst of their "boundedness," all of the SES members interviewed expressed a common idea or motivation for persevering within the systems and environments of their work. Every interviewee suggested that one has to do something. "I think a lot of us are motivated by a – or a lot of us take this approach, and that is you can't do nothing, you have to do something. And if that something is not totally satisfactory, again, it is better than doing nothing."

The presence of truncated free-will and/or abbreviated sovereignty within the context of "boundedness" segues nicely into a discussion of the next focused code within the category/theme of "the work." Despite the "boundedness" of limits on action, awareness, choice, options, position, opinions, sovereignty, etc. experienced by the SES members, the SES members acknowledged that they still had avenues for self-expression

and self-determination. This introduces the next focused code, "bureaucratic sovereignty."

4.3.2 Bureaucratic Sovereignty

"Bureaucratic sovereignty" refers to the degree of sovereignty that the interviewees suggest exists within the work of their organizations. In the classical politics/administration dichotomy, the administrators supposedly played no role in determining policy. They simply implemented policy handed to them from the politicians. Obviously, public administrators understand this simple design not to be the case in actual practice. There are several forces that act to constrain bureaucratic entrepreneurialism, such as rigid legislation, budgets, and legislative and executive oversight, but organizations, sub-organizations, and units within the bureaucracy typically experience moments where they can be creative, influential, and, to some extent, sovereign. Therefore, despite their positions, roles, and overall predicaments within their bureaucratic environments, they experience both freedom and subordination.

An SES member from DOL provided a quote that addresses this concept of "bureaucratic sovereignty" well. "Some people think bureaucrats are supposed to be nothing more than automata, scrupulously carrying out Congressional/Administration policy without interpretation or creativity. But that's impossible, of course, and in fact, government as we know it would collapse if that legalistic model actually obtained." Therefore, bureaucrats are able to exercise truncated levels of sovereignty. Such opportunities for "bureaucratic sovereignty" result from expertise and influence,

entrepreneurialism and creativity, and instances in which administrators are simply granted varying degrees of sovereignty.

Expertise and influence on the part of administrators toward policymakers involves the depth of knowledge and experience administrators have for the nature and specifics of the work that their departments do versus the policy ideas Congress and the Administration have for making policy.

> As good bureaucrats, your job is to implement the policy decisions of the political appointees of the given department. But as a bureaucrat with a longer perspective of the agency business, you have a tremendous influence on the shape and definition of issues that the political appointees consider. So you do have some influence. It's not just simply a matter of saluting and saying 'Yes, ma'am;' 'Yes, sir.' . . . So, you have a tremendous – just simply by basis of your institutional position, you have an opportunity to influence policy that's made by policy officials. When the decision's made, of course, then you're dutiful. If it works the way it's supposed to, you dutifully implement the decisions that policy officials have made. You do not try to undermine the policy officials.

The importance of influencing policymakers while maintain one's duty was also pointed out by an SES member from the FAA. With regard to bureaucratic expertise and influence, the SES member said, "A lot of things that we have to do, if we get the support of the top leadership, really become a lot easier – so that boulder becomes a lot smaller. If you become the champion, and you're constantly at odds with the people on the top deck, then that boulder becomes really big."

In addition to administrators' expertise and influence affecting policymakers, administrators also employ entrepreneurialism and creativity in order to exercise "bureaucratic sovereignty" within policy handed to them by policymakers. To perform these activities, "in the administrative body, it's an ongoing creative tension." For example, one SES member pointed out, "We undertook some efforts in the mid '90s to

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deliberately refocus the mission of our programs away from what I would call a welfare kind of approach to a public health nutrition kind of approach. And that was deliberate on our part." Similarly, within USDA's WIC program, "At a time when the program could have gone in an entirely different direction, and become just another basic food assistance program, we insisted on its public health role and we beat that into the heads the states and local folks who run our programs. And I think for having done that, WIC has achieved the stature that it has today and the success."

Sometimes, administrators don't have to exercise strategy or tactics in order to actualize degrees of "bureaucratic sovereignty." There are instances in which policymakers grant varying degrees of sovereignty to the administrators. A concrete example comes from one of the SES members who works in HR. With regard to evaluations, OPM used to audit HR departments. "Now, through devolution, HR is doing its own audits. We have discretion to come up with certain aspects of our evaluations." On a more general level, an SES member who worked at the MSPB explained, "The work that we did was within the decided parameters. We were authorized by an act of Congress to do a certain amount of work. They had established a set of merit principles . . . and that was our universe. Within that defined universe . . . we developed our own methodology in deciding 'what are we going to study.'" Having granted the MSPB room for a degree of sovereignty, when Congress wanted the MSPB to research something, they actually had the ability to refuse. With regard to a potential issue of sexual harassment within the Federal workforce, Congress "asked if we would take a look at that, so that was an instance where Congress made a request. We actually could have

politely declined, but the first director of the office who hired me decided that that was something worth doing."

4.3.3 Interconnectedness

"Interconnectedness" refers to situations and ways expressed by the interviewees in which one's personal and/or one's organizational issues, decisions, actions, and consequences, are not isolated events or episodes. "Interconnectedness" refers to the ways in which issues and activities interact, influence other issues and activities, and result in consequences for other/a multiplicity of (other) issues and activities. Rarely, if ever, does one issue or activity not affect in some way another related, or totally unrelated, issue or activity. Therefore, to the interviewee, attention must be paid to the predicted and unpredicted causes, understandings, and consequences of various issues and activities.

The "interconnectedness" of policies, resources, departments and target populations occurs at every level from a broad macro level to a specific issue area to a small, determined, and cooperative level. On the macro side of things, one interviewee suggested, based on the interviewee's experience, "The economy changes, relationships with other countries change, public opinion changes, and all of the changes affect each other and sometimes compete with each other." Another SES member also cited the "interconnectedness" between economic issues and the citizens served by the SES member's department and programs. "I think that part of being in public service is being open to issues that affect the population that you are obligated to serve. And so, the economy changes in terms of who is in need in our business; so, that's going to – issues

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will change in accordance with that." Accordingly, in the face of interdependent issues, programs, and populations, an interviewee advises, "There are various different perspectives; therefore, the best policy considers those various perspectives so that it's developed with an understanding of how it affects the whole." However, such communication and exchange will not necessarily get rid of the difficulties of broad level interconnectedness. A different SES member claims that the increased complexity of American society adds to the challenges and difficulties of an interconnected, public/private realm. "There's just all these different possibilities and different views and then there's a huge amount of exchange, as communication becomes more instant and massive. The opportunity for this to fly in all different directions is greater."

It is easier to identify concrete examples of "interconnectedness" at the lower issue-specific levels of public work. For example, an interviewee suggests the possible need to tie together food assistance programs and economic development programs. The interviewee who does so was the same interviewee who suggested that, although government programs are set up in silos, people's lives and needs are not. "Maybe what we need to do is also work with the economic development people to make sure that there is a large supermarket with good produce in it instead of only 7-11's in that inner-city neighborhood. So, all of a sudden, you started connecting a variety of issues to come together with a fully realized approach to it."

On a small, planned, and cooperative level, some departments and agencies try to diminish any possible, predictable negative effects of "interconnectedness" by working on issues collaboratively. "A lot of my work we do in tandem with other offices, especially as they relate to the systems and applications that these different offices use.

So, when you have a new system being developed, it's really paramount that they include – what I do – information security, in the development of that application or in the development of that system." However, the are potential positive and negative consequences resulting from the "interconnectedness" of public work that cannot necessarily be anticipated and planned.

Even the best laid plans can result in solutions creating problems. It was surprising to hear all of the interviewees acknowledge the issue of solutions creating problems. Their comments addressed the potential negative consequences of "interconnectedness." "Initially, efforts create other problems. Particular action towards a particular problem might adversely affect the general good." A different interviewee pointed out that, due to the likelihood of efforts creating problems, one must be willing and able to adapt policies as policy outcomes unfold. "As you develop policy, some policies have unintended consequences, and so, you have to – issues may arise from a policy that's put in place and you're going to have to adapt to that." The same SES member who addressed the role of "interconnectedness" in the SES member's office working and planning with other offices acknowledged the potential negative impacts on outside offices based on activities within one's office. "It's kind of like the yin and the yang. When we develop a solution set, it could very well impact the business processes that other offices have in their office, and so, they've got to go back and readjust it based on what it is they do. So, yes, a lot of times what I do has a real impact on the other offices within the agency."

Lastly, the ways in which administrators find themselves working in the wake of others also highlights an important aspect of "interconnectedness." No issue definition

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moment, decision making moment, implementation moment, or evaluation moment occurs isolated from the contexts and previous, interdependent decisions, policies, and populations. Each moment is based on previous moments. "I see there's a tremendous amount of building off of previous decisions, and that's sort of evolutional in almost like a growth process that I think is fairly typical of the work that comes along." This "growth process" can become very complex if one were to try to trace all of the connections between the decisions and actions. "Like any other complex structure, it builds its own continuing splintering and complexities that just billows out like a fractal image on a computer."

For some public administrators, the wakes in which they work are much more evident. Those who have to deal with precedent are well aware of working within the wakes of others and/or themselves. "One of the major things that career folks like myself always contend with is precedent. And, it goes like this. If you do something for State A that's a little extraordinary, States B, C and D will always want the same treatment." This SES member provided a powerful example of such issues of precedence with regard to the interconnectedness of public work.

> In disaster situations, sometimes decisions are made that are expedient --
> and Katrina was a great example. There were political pressures -- once it
> was clear that the government failed the people of the Gulf Coast, it
> became very clear that the political directive was to do anything and
> everything that is needed to support the people in the Gulf Coast. One
> level, that's a very noble position to take. But what that led us to do was
> make decisions about the operation of our programs that once done create
> a precedent downstream. And those precedents were not necessarily good
> ones. And I won't necessarily get into details, but I can tell you that that's
> a prime example of where we are viewed as sometimes foot dragging
> because, 'don't you know these people are suffering?' Yes, they are. But
> this isn't the way that our programs are structured to support people in
> this situation. What you want to do is take the program here. Now, once

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you do that, every other state that ever comes in this situation, again, is going to want to do that same thing. And, at some point, somebody, Congress, OMB, whatever, is going to say, wait a minute, what are you doing here? You may be long gone and "hail fellow well met" for being the hero of Bogalusa, Louisiana, but we bushmucks back here are going to be stuck with that decision for a long time.

4.3.4 Proximity to the Mission

Proximity to the mission refers to the effects on interviewees' experiences and views that result from how close one is to the mission of one's department or agency. Separation from organizational missions appeared when the attributes of an interviewee's work resulted in the interviewee not feeling a hands-on ownership and sense of involvement in one's administrative work. This separation influenced the interviewee's views and experiences of administrative work. One's close proximity to organizational missions increased one's sense of ownership and relevance. Such experiences of proximity affected interviewees' views and experiences of administrative work in ways nearly opposite to those who experienced a missional disconnect.

As mentioned earlier in "the environment" section, one of the SES members stated the different ways that the interviewee felt about the interviewee's work as a result of the interviewee's perception of proximity to the mission of the interviewee's department. Clearly, it makes sense to revisit that interviewee's quotes in this section. The interviewee explained that at the USDA, "As an HR administrator, I have to work harder to keep in touch with the department's mission." Therefore, the interviewee is returning to the interviewee's previous department. "For me, it's easier to feel connected to the mission within the environment and context of DHS – and the types of people, military and former military, that work at DHS."

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Meanwhile, an SES member from DOL feels very connected to the mission of the interviewee's department. This interviewee's proximity to the department's mission gives the interviewee a buttressed sense of involvement in the department's work. "Well, that's part of my responsibility is to have antenna up, to identify where problems exist, where opportunities exist, to improve what we are doing, to better deliver the services that we're responsible for, to overcome shortcomings that we can see in the organization."

An SES member from a USDA food assistance program feels so connected to the mission of the interviewee's department that the interviewee argues that everyone involved must understand and interact with the policies being implemented. This includes policymakers, administrators, and social workers.

> If you don't know the policy, if you aren't telling the policy makers that their policy stinks, then you can't really serve that client completely. So, you have to understand policy. You have to understand how it affects – even if you're going to stay in direct practice, that's fine, but don't ignore the policy. Be someone who talks to the policy makers and tells them what's right, what's wrong – you're the one that knows. Let them know that; be a part of the process. So, I guess going all the way back, it's just simply having made the decision that that was the direction I wanted to take, and hopefully, I have encouraged some people at that direct practice level to think about how that policy affects, instead of just living it.

4.3.5 Communication and Exchange

"Communication and exchange" refers to the ways and the activities through which the interviewees received and shared understandings of issues, work processes, and evaluations of work performed with other elements within the various systems involved in the interviewees' work and environments. "Communication and exchange" can serve as a means of reaching out to citizens, identifying issues, creating policy, making decisions, improving performance, and fostering relationships and influence.

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Each interviewee referenced the importance and value of "communication and exchange" within his or her work.

Reaching out to citizens served several functions according to the interviewees. Communicating with the public could be an "educational process to inform the citizens what and why the government does what it does to protect the people." The SES member who voiced this idea also stated that, generally, "The public doesn't know what the government does and what the issues are." In addition to informing citizens of issues, other SES members commented on the utility of communicating with citizens in order to identify issues and to consider responses to such issues. "Someone who works in the Federal government will probably see things differently than someone that works in state government or at the local level or someone who does not work in government at all. There are various different perspectives; therefore, the best policy considers those various perspectives so that it's developed with an understanding of how it affects the whole." "Communication and exchange" can also help administrators and policymakers manage the "interconnectedness" and the potential for solutions creating problems. While responding to the idea of solutions creating problems, an SES member responded,

> Sure, sure. That's why that communication thing we were talking about earlier is extremely important. If you are communicating fully with all the different parties that could end up being involved, you can minimize that kind of an impact. If you don't, then you have somebody knocking on your door saying you forgot to call me, this is going to affect me in this way. Then all of a sudden you are having to backtrack and try to work something out because -- so that communication thing and being really wide in your thoughtfulness of those varies perspectives is extremely important to the planning process. It's really, really important in the planning process.

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"Communication and exchange" as a means of identifying issues involves not only communicating with citizens, but it also involves interacting with other administrators, policymakers, and any interested parties. "We tried to keep active in terms of keeping in touch with members of our community of interest, which tended to be the human resources community, H.R. directors and staffs, you know, senior executives. We would touch base with the unions as employee representatives and so on. We would ask them, what are the burning issues of the day?" Sometimes, "communication and exchange" would occur through research in addition to face-to-face or interactive communication. An SES member from the FAA identified ways in which the interviewee's department facilitated identifying issues "through networking, through reading of publications, looking at market surveys, and talking to peers." Similarly, an SES member from the MSPB also identified how "We would read reports from the government accountability office – at the time, the general accounting office. We would read reports being produced by the office of personnel management and just kind of have a sense of what was going." In the end, most of the interviewees suggested that effective issue identification through "communication and exchange" would involve all parties – those providing services and those receiving services.

As issues are identified and defined, "communication and exchange" enables parties involved to propose policy responses to the issues at hand. One SES member emphasized the necessity and effectiveness of including multiple voices while developing policy alternatives. "It's going to take the people effected by those problems and the global environment and so on. And it's going to take partnerships with private sector, with individuals, with educational institutions. No one segment's going to resolve it all."

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However, another interviewee brought back the significance of those in government for ultimately being responsible for creating policies. This idea brings "communication and exchange" back into the legislative and administrative arenas. "Well, at some point, because we're talking about government, there's going to be a law, and there's going to be debate. There's going to be alternative statutory proposals, alternative laws proposed. There will be a public debate; Congress will vote; and, then, debate is ended for that period of time." This quote brings up the significance of "communication and exchange" in decision making.

The topic of "communication and exchange" in decision making involves both administrative decisions and legislative decisions. With regard to administrative decision making, one SES member stated, "As director of the office, I needed to absorb a lot of information from my staff, from my external customers, Congress, the agencies, and the Administration. I had to form my own conclusions at some point. We couldn't debate things endlessly. I say, 'Okay, these are the things we're taking to our board member for proposed studies.'" With regard to legislative decision making, an SES member explained, "If we are considering major legislative initiatives on the part of the Administration, we do routinely have what we call field hearings, in which we'll go out and test the temperature, if you will, of the public on certain issues." The interviewee goes on to identify potential downsides to relying on "communication and exchange" with interested parties during legislative decision making moments. "Again, I don't know whether that's objective, because what you wind up with is you hear from those people who are motivated enough to actually show up and say something. And, I'm often

concerned that that process begets a false impression of what is really needed out there because you only hear from people who have a gripe."

With programs and policies in place, "communication and exchange" can also facilitate improving performance. Interviewees identified interactions across departments and continued interactions with citizens as ways of receiving feedback and input. An SES member who did HR for the USDA explained how the interviewee would "cross reference with other HR departments" with regard to the ways the different HR offices performed their work. A different SES member made a similar suggestion on a broader level. "I think what needs to happen is there needs to be forums developed where folks in public administration get together and discuss what those problems are in an attempt to get clarification about what it is that we're trying to solve." Lastly, another interviewee cited "communication and exchange" between government and citizens as being an important avenue for feedback. "If you aren't looking at the client when you're doing it, then you don't know what you're doing. And so, communication with those who actually operate the program and those who are actually served by the program have to be a part of the process."

Lastly, and importantly, "communication and exchange" can serve as a means for fostering relationships and influence. Relationships amongst interested groups, and perhaps even uninterested groups, encourage awareness of issues and feedback. "You find out about the issues through your partnerships, through open communication." For administrators, relationships and influence are also useful within the bureaucracy. "I reported to the chairman of the agency or to the chief of staff and to the chairman. I needed to keep them satisfied. So, I tried to keep good lines of communication there.

... I would try to influence their judgment, their opinions – it's a relationship that you develop with your political leadership."

Now that this section has defined and described the category/theme "the work," along with its multiple focused codes (see table 7), the following section does the same with the next category/theme, "the individual."

Table 7: Defining the Focused Codes within "The Work"

Focused Code	Definition
Boundedness	"Boundedness" refers to limits on action, awareness, choice, options, position, opinions, sovereignty, etc. that appear within the interviewees statements. It is a focused code for actions, situations, feelings, and/or statements voiced by interviewees in which the individual and/or the situation has anywhere from a small to a large degree of external determinance. However, this doesn't suggest determinism or totalitarian deterministic systems. It acknowledges truncated free-will, abbreviated sovereignty, and finite capacities.
Bureaucratic Sovereignty	"Bureaucratic sovereignty" refers to the degree of sovereignty that the interviewees suggest exists within the work of their organizations. In the classical politics/administration dichotomy, the administrators supposedly played no role in determining policy. They simply implemented policy handed to them from the politicians. Obviously, public administrators understand this simple design to not be the case in actual practice. There are several forces that act to constrain bureaucratic entrepreneurialism, such as rigid legislation, budgets, and legislative oversight, but organizations within the bureaucracy typically experience moments where they can be creative, influential, and, to some extent, sovereign. Therefore, despite their positions, roles, and overall predicaments within their bureaucratic environments, they experience both freedom and subordination.
Interconnectedness	"Interconnectedness" refers to situations and ways expressed by the interviewees in which one's personal and/or one's organizational issues, decisions, actions, and consequences, are not isolated events or episodes. Interconnectedness refers to the ways in which issues and activities interact, influence other issues and activities, and result in consequences for other/a multiplicity of (other) issues and activities. Rarely, if ever, does one issue or activity not affect in some way another related, or

	totally unrelated, issue or activity. Therefore, to the interviewee, attention must be paid to the predicted and unpredicted causes, understandings, and consequences of various issues and activities.
Proximity to the Mission	"Proximity to the mission" refers to the effects on interviewees' experiences and views that result from how close one is to the mission of one's department or agency. Separation from organizational missions appeared when the nature of an interviewee's work resulted in the interviewee not feeling a hands-on ownership and sense of involvement in one's administrative work. This separation influenced the interviewee's views and experiences of administrative work. One's close proximity to organizational missions increased one's sense of ownership and relevance. Such experiences of proximity affected interviewees' views and experiences of administrative work in ways nearly opposite to those who experienced a mission disconnect.
Communication and Exchange	"Communication and exchange" refers to the ways and the activities through which the interviewees received and shared understandings of issues, work processes, and evaluations of work performed with other elements within the various systems involved in the interviewees' work and environments.

4.4 The Individual

I've always had the sense that solutions and progress, rare beasts, occur

within the government almost in defiance of the ordained order – that you

have to deviate from the prescribed rules to some degree if you ever hope

to really accomplish anything. So, you win your little battles, often

purposefully below the radar, and notch your belt and go on. You've got

your rock, but you play your games around it. Some people think

bureaucrats are supposed to be nothing more than automata,

scrupulously carrying out Congressional/Administration policy without

interpretation or creativity. But, that's impossible, of course, and, in fact,

government as we know it would collapse if that legalistic model actually

obtained – if for no other reason than that life is too complex for the law

and regulations to cover everything. The fun part is in dealing with all

the extrapolations and interpolations and wiggle room, and trying to use

a pitifully small lever to slide the whole ungainly mass a few inches in the

proper direction – often against its will.

The category "the individual" refers to the personal/human condition of the interviewees as public administrators and as members of the SES. Items within this category address the degrees to which the interviewees experience individual sovereignty and relevance within their day-to-day and overall work lives. Obviously, one's work life can bleed into one's personal life – and even into one's sense of identity. Therefore, the ways in which individuals construct meaning within their lives are involved in this

category/theme. Similarly, the issues of motivation and satisfaction within the interviewees' personal and work lives occur within this category/theme.

The category/theme of "the individual" is an important category/theme because it addresses head on what it means to exist within the system – to toil and to persevere in the face of one's work and environments. In doing so, it establishes the potential for individual relevance and significance within what could be considered, from multiple points-of-view, a never-ending, maybe even futile, system. Therefore, "the individual" focuses the interview information on ways in which administrators experience their work and the ways in which their work impacts their lives. For example, one SES member expressed, "I go home everyday feeling like America is a little better place for the work we do, than if we didn't do it and there's a reward in that. And I have to remind myself that often. I don't mean that to sound corny, but that really does motivate me." This interviewee is expressing the experience of performing the interviewee's work and the experience's effect on the interviewee's self-concept.

Obviously, one's self-concept also affects one's work, one's reasons for working, and the relevance one creates through one's work. "There are some of us who actually find the process of coming up with an approach to a problem interesting and challenging. You realize that somebody is going to do something to fix this one way or another, or try to fix this, and if you have an interest in the problem, as you've defined it, you would like to be at the table when that fix is being made." Being involved in the decision making processes of government was frequently cited as an avenue for being relevant and for exercising individual influence. An SES member who worked in direct practice as a social worker before joining the USDA explained that "the thing that I started

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recognizing was that there were all these rules about how I could serve that person that didn't make any sense to me. And so I decided to go back and get into public administration."

As the interviewees each explained their experiences and feelings of individual relevance, significance, and even sovereignty within their positions, they also brought up the issue of being an individual within an enormous, administrative, governmental collective and/or machine. "I'm also realistic enough to understand that in the great scheme of things are my little contributions. How much do they influence? Not hugely, but, that's just again a reality check. I think it's better than the things that I had done were not done at all. But yeah, it's a small ripple in that very, very large pond. That's fine, you know, that's the nature of things." A different interviewee stated, "It's weird because, obviously, I think that my work is important – because I said I think I make a difference everyday because of the work that I do. But in terms of the government as a whole, we're all important."

Perhaps, it is a matter of the interviewees being individuals within an enormous federal work force, or perhaps, it is because of a lack of understanding on the part of citizens, as some interviewees suggested, but all of the SES members interviewed claimed that, although they found their contributions significant and relevant to the operations of the government, most citizens were likely unaware of such contributions. An SES member from the FAA pointed out that the SES member's work is "very relevant, but it's – for them [the public], it's transparent. They really don't see it." Similarly, despite another SES member's work directly affecting thousands of people's lives in important ways, the SES member suggested that the SES member "likes to

believe that it is relevant; however, he acknowledges that it isn't the first thing people think about when they think about the government."

So, if one's work and contributions are likely to be overlooked, if one must wrestle to work within the binds of bureaucracy and budgets, if one must operate within environments full of politics and flux and change, what drives one to continue to persevere within such work? If one is to exist within the system, it is worthwhile to pay attention to one's decision to do so – one's motivation and satisfaction for persevering within the system. The desire to make things better for society arose in each interview. "I think a lot of us are motivated by a – or a lot of us take this approach, and that is 'You can't do nothing; you have to do something.' And if that something is not totally satisfactory, again, it is better than doing nothing." A different SES member expressed the SES member's drive to engage and persevere saying, "it may sound like motherhood and apple pie, but I still believe in our society, in our way of life and the ability for me to be able to be a contributing member to the perpetuation of that society and way of life and morals and stuff."

There were other reasons for participating in the SES member's types of work as well. In addition to contributing to society, some interviewees also identified being motivated by, and receiving satisfaction from, the creativity required by their work. "Knowing that everyday I've got new things that I've got to deal with doesn't bother me at all, because that is life, that is the human condition." Another interviewee cited a similar source of motivation, satisfaction, and perseverance in the interviewee's work. "I feel the ability to actually make a difference, to be creative, to find ways, not withstanding the fact that it's very difficult to make these programs work a little better."

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An SES member from the USDA expressed one of the SES member's motivating reasons for doing what the SES member does. In doing so, the interviewee's motivating reason interestingly provides a segue into the last definitive issue that this section discusses: responsibility. "This is going to sound a little weird, but I believe that – and this is why – I mean, it's interesting, I do firmly believe that those who benefit from what I think is a remarkable economic system and a remarkable political system at some level, have some responsibility to those who by no fault of their own aren't as blessed."

Responsibility is another definitive aspect within the category/theme "the individual." In this category/theme, responsibility refers to organizational responsibilities, public responsibilities, and social/philosophical responsibilities. All of the interviewees pointed out differences between the private and public sectors. One suggested that, within the public sector, "there's a whole series of ethics, regulations, and rules that you have to adhere to, and you would expect that in the public sector." A different interviewee stated, "It is incredibly important in public administration that you remain credible. You can never lie or express anything other than the unbiased truth." Lastly, since public administrators are tasked with serving the public, administrators have responsibilities for trying to ensure that they can do so. "I think that there are always issues that you might not be aware of. I think that, you know, part of being in public service is being open to issues that affect the population that you are obligated to serve."

All of the issues above address the personal/human condition of the interviewees as public administrators and as members of the SES. These issues influence, and are fodder for, the ways in which individuals construct meaning within their organizational and personal lives. Having indentified and addressed some of the definitive components

of the category/theme "the individual," the remainder of this section defines and illustrates the focused codes that compose "the individual." Focused codes that contribute to this category/theme include: "individual sovereignty and relevance;" "perseverance, satisfaction and meaning;" and "responsibility." Table 8 outlines the focused codes discussed in this section. Table 9, at the end of section 4.4, quickly lists and defines the focused codes that contribute to "the Individual."

Table 8: Focused Codes within "The Individual"

Focused Codes	Category/Theme
• Individual Sovereignty and Relevance • Perseverance, Satisfaction, and Meaning • Responsibility	The Individual

4.4.1 Individual Sovereignty and Relevance

"Individual sovereignty and relevance" addresses the instances expressed by interviewees in which they found themselves able to have, to various degrees, their say and to forge their own paths despite the constraints around them. Additionally, instances in which the interviewees were not simply "cogs in the machine" added to their senses of relevance within the work of the government and within public administration in general. This focused code differs from bureaucratic sovereignty by way of the interviewees' expressions of personal control, authority, and relevance. Bureaucratic sovereignty expresses a similar idea as individual sovereignty but at an organizational level. Individual sovereignty, as the word "individual" suggests, identifies the personal and individual condition of one's experienced sovereignty and resulting relevance.

One's degrees and experiences of "individual sovereignty and relevance" vary across contexts. One interviewee used the phrase "ongoing creative tension" to express

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the interviewee's experiences within organizational settings and moments that were neither explicitly regulated, laissez-faire, nor well informed/clearly defined. The different ways that different variables within the interviewee's predicaments came together resulted in moments requiring individual creativity to identify, manage, and/or solve organizational/legislative issues.

In addition to contexts permitting "ongoing creative tension," it emerged from the interviews that instances of "individual sovereignty and relevance" resulted from the power of the individual's organizational position, the individual's ability to apply/communicate his or her experiences, and from the individual's personal, political power. An SES member from DOL explained that the SES member had a degree of political clout that the SES member would use to try to influence policy makers and other administrators. One SES member pointed out, "Just simply by basis of your institutional position, you have an opportunity to influence policy that's made by policy officials." Similarly, with regard to experience, "As a bureaucrat with a longer perspective of the agency business, you have a tremendous influence on the shape and definition of issues that the political appointees consider." Lastly, an SES member from the USDA explained

> My personal contribution to the work of the entire government is probably unobservable. But, my work in terms of the Department of Agriculture for reasons of both position and also – I don't want to say influence is the right word – I have established some credibility over a certain time on some issues. So, I do get called upon frequently by political officials to express my opinion. I don't always win the day, but. . . So, in that sense, I feel like I have some influence upon the government insofar as the Department of Agriculture's concerned.

Considering the numerous politics, policies, regulations, inter-organizational influences, and intra-organizational influences, it seems like the SES members might fall pray to the bureaucrat-as-cog scenario. However, the interviewees frequently expressed sensing degrees of ownership of their work. This sense of ownership also affected interviewees' senses of "individual sovereignty and relevance." The greater one experienced ownership of one's work, the greater the interviewee experienced "individual sovereignty and relevance."

> There are some of us who actually find the process of coming up with an approach to a problem interesting and challenging. If you want to be – you realize that somebody is going to do something to fix this one way or another, or try to fix this, and if you have an interest in the problem, as you've defined it, you would like to be at the table when that fix is being made. It is the kind of the walk in some of us, the policy walk, if you will.

This type of "individual sovereignty and relevance" was a very common concept amongst the interviewees. All of them addressed experiencing varying degrees of ownership, usually strong degrees of ownership, within their changing contextual situations and environments. "If you aren't telling the policy makers that their policy stinks, then you can't really serve that client completely. So you have to understand policy. . . . Be someone who talks to the policy makers and tells them what's right, what's wrong. You're the one that knows. Let them know that. Be a part of the process."

One SES member brought up another aspect of individual sovereignty with regard to ownership of one's work. "There are a lot of structures (political, legal, social) to keep me in my place, but I take it upon myself to be creative and rebellious and to make my work my own." Therefore, "individual sovereignty and relevance" occurs within and beyond the formal rules and understood organizational norms of the SES member's

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environments. Obviously, according to the interviewees, such rebellious behaviors and activities must be well-informed and well-managed in order to do good for the public and to not do harm to the public or to the individual SES member.

Despite the organizational, political, and sociological hurdles in front of them, interviewees continuously expressed the idea that they were not solely cogs in a machine or figurative sailors tossed about on the tumultuous seas of public, bureaucratic life. Instead, they felt as though they mattered – that they were capable of both surviving and thriving within their predicaments. They found and experienced relevance in their work. "Most people wouldn't know the number of – one in five Americans at some point is the beneficiary of one or more of our programs. They may not know who it is that's behind the green screen cranking this stuff out. But at the end of the day, we do have, I think, a profound effect on the lives of lots of folks even though they don't recognize us." Such relevance does not only serve the public. It is also applicable intra-governmentally. "In public administration, very often the head is the guy who sets the course of speed and tone of the rest of the work force. And, if you're a good leader, then the people who are underneath you will follow your example and kind of model you and ask that you mentor them."

With regard to relevance, it is interesting to see within the interview information that all of the interviewees were aware of their individual works contributing to the overall relevance and effects of public work. "How relevant am I? No more relevant than anybody else. You know, every single piece of us makes the difference, like the drops in an ocean. That's what makes the ocean, yeah." Another interviewee said, regarding the interviewee's relevance to the average citizen, "On one level, a tiny, tiny

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ripple. Not that my individual contributions aren't going to have a huge impact at all on the average citizen. But, the fact that I have joined in that collective endeavor with the people in my office, with the people – with the other 1.9 million civilian employees, the work of government, the work of public administration has a huge impact."

The topic of relevance segues well into the next focused code within "the individual." Each of the interviewees associated relevance with satisfaction. Therefore, this discussion moves on to the focused code "perseverance, satisfaction, and meaning."

4.4.2 Perseverance, Satisfaction, and Meaning

"Perseverance, satisfaction, and meaning" refers to the experiences, attitudes, and opinions expressed by the interviewees in which they state that despite the lack of finish lines within their work; despite the legal, budgetary, organizational, and personal limitations they confront; despite the presence of a public who rarely seems to understand or appreciate their work; and despite the constant political and issue flux and change in which they work, there is value in perseverance. They expressed a value and/or need to persevere in order to do good for society and to make a difference. Regardless of the discouraging aspects of their administrative predicaments and the motivating aspects of their administrative predicaments, the interviewees expressed senses of satisfaction and meaning. This "perseverance, satisfaction, and meaning" involves expressions of motivations for continuing to work and to serve within their positions. They do so despite occasional episodes of frustration and conflicting feelings. They find satisfaction in their work and consider their efforts of doing the best they can, considering their circumstances, to be worthwhile.

The interviewees claimed there was value in persevering in their work, despite the difficulties they faced. The challenges addressed within "the environment" and "the work" lead most interviewees to acknowledge varying degrees of absurdity in trying to cure society's ills. However, one SES member said, "It's absurd, though, not to try to."

All of the interviewees expressed a value and/or need to persevere in order to do good for society and to make a difference. "You really have to take a look at what it is you're doing and the benefit that the public forum is going to have out of your efforts. . . . So, in that way, it's kind of self-rewarding. The challenge is that it's always changing. There's new technologies; there's new issues of problems; there's new regulations and laws. And, those things kind of keep it as a moving target." Accordingly, within the SES members' environments and work, "The best you can do in those circumstances is just keep – in my view – is to keep plugging away and try to correct obvious errors where you see them. And, where you can determine that you've gone astray, you go back to another thing." The same interviewee explained a similar idea metaphorically later during the interview. "It's like sort of being in a row boat or a canoe with 1700 people canoeing. We're not going to make it across the ocean, you know, but you can get better at paddling; you can develop rhythms; you can improve the way that boat navigates our streams. I think that's sort of the way I see it."

As the interviewees acknowledged the value and/or need to persevere in public work, they also discussed experiences of satisfaction and meaning in doing what they do. "I get a great deal of gratification from the fact that I honestly believe – and maybe I'm wrong; maybe, I'm living in a dream world – but I honestly believe that what we do makes a difference, and that then makes me very happy. And, that then makes me love

my job." Interestingly, the SES members' positive feelings are routinely accompanied by potentially discouraging feelings. "I go home everyday feeling like America is a little better place for the work we do than if we didn't do it, and there's a reward in that. And, I have to remind myself of that often. I don't mean that to sound corny, but that really does motivate me."

Sometimes, one's feelings of satisfaction and meaning correspond with an awareness of being involved in a larger, collective endeavor to do good for society.

> Collectively, though, you take satisfaction in that it's a collective endeavor. It's not, 'What am I doing to change the world?' What am I doing to change things around me that I can change, and how does that connect to the bigger picture, and how well do these little cogs get together to make this machine move? And I do step back and see that machine moving and say, 'That's cool, I had a little part in that and I feel good about that.'

As apparent throughout this section, the focused code "perseverance, satisfaction, and meaning" involves SES members expressing motivations for continuing to work and to serve within their positions. Additionally, as already indentified within this section, the desire to do good for society transcends the definitive aspects of this focused code. This desire is a prominent component of what motivates the interviewees. "The motivation to continue doing this work is strictly the fact that, if you're looking to create on balance more good than harm, truly, you got to be motivated by the fact that, look, we're trying to make things better. And nothing stays static." Some of the interviewees contextualized the motivation to do good for society by way of specifying that desire within public work. When asked about what motivates a particular SES member to do public work, that SES member answered

The realization that what we're doing will make people and society a better place. And, that's – it's funny because I've had other interviews where people have asked me pretty much the same question and what I find is that people in the corporate world seem to be motivated by stock options and money and promotions. People in the public sector, for the most part, are motivated by more of the intrinsic things, especially in the Department of Defense, where it's 'I made mission.' 'I saved lives.' There's more of those intrinsic things that you can't put a dollar figure on or a measure about.

With all of the interviewees identifying similar, if not the same, motivators, it suggests a degree of shared values and/or interests within SES members. "I think different people get different gratification from different things, and I think that what happens as you do very often find people who group together because they have similar values or similar ways of appreciating or wanting to spend their days or whatever." A different SES member, speaking about a section of the USDA gives an equivalent and more specific observation about this topic.

We are for the most part Democratic and left leaning. And, this agency attracts those kinds of people, with those kinds of histories, and those kinds of experiences. I would say that we're Democratic. It doesn't mean that – we try not to undermine other Administrations, other goals. We do do our jobs as well as we can no matter what Administration or what agenda is here. Just so you know that some of us still think we can make the world a better place.

As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this section, perseverance and satisfaction persist despite occasional episodes of frustration and conflicting feelings on the parts of the SES members. The interviewees recognize that "if you're one that gets easily frustrated because you can't see a lot of progress, then you're going to get frustrated and be dissatisfied for working in the public sector." As top administrators, SES members are aware of the frustration and conflicting feelings that occur within themselves and those who work below them.

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People do get burned out on occasion. It's like, 'wow, man, I thought I was going to solve the world's problems, and the world still has problems.' Yeah, people get burned out. They need to move on to other challenges or do other things in life. But by and large, the 1.9 million civilian employees in government, most of those folks are taking satisfaction that, day-to-day, they're doing something useful. They're doing something constructive, not every single one of them, but most of them, and taking satisfaction in being motivated. And we continue to strive.

One interviewee does a good job of summing up this topic of "perseverance, satisfaction, and meaning" in the face of frustration and conflicting feelings. "This may sound a little corny, but some of us feel this way, that in the end of the day, we can go home and feel that there are a whole lot of American families who are better off for what we do here than would be the case if we just said 'What the hell, it's a frustrating environment; let's quit and go home and play golf.'"

In the end, the interviewees continue to find satisfaction and meaning in their work and consider their efforts of doing the best that they can, considering their circumstances, to be worthwhile. "I take satisfaction in the small victories, and I mourn the losses that come along the way, whether it's I didn't achieve this in the office that I wanted to, or on a personal level, things happen, but you deal with it. And it's – you know, you take satisfaction where you can and happiness where you can and you move on." Lastly, one interviewee included the interviewee's staff's desire for doing and accomplishing things that are worthwhile with the interviewee's own. "Day-to-day, I had responsibility for a staff, needing to make sure that they were being well utilized, that they were finding fulfillment in what they were doing, and we were basically just trying to make sure that we were doing something worthwhile because that was a big motivation for all of us. We wanted to do something constructive, worthwhile."

4.4.3 Responsibility

The focused code "responsibility" addresses the role and significance responsibility plays within the work and experience of public administrators. As a public administrator, one faces a field of responsibilities: organizational responsibilities, public responsibilities, and social/philosophical responsibilities. Additionally, public administrators face the responsibilities of being held accountable for their decisions and for the consequences of their decisions.

Within the focused code "responsibility," organizational responsibilities refer to responsibilities administrators have to one's superiors, to one's position, and to one's subordinates. These include responsibilities for detecting problems/issues, for explaining problems/issues to higher ups, and for administering policy. "As a manager of 1,700 people doing what we are trying to do, I'm constantly trying to figure out ways to discuss and identify the key questions and problems and areas where the program is not addressing the values that I think need to be addressing as well as it should." This quote is interesting as it addresses both "individual sovereignty and relevance" and "responsibility." The interviewee went on to explain that, after the interviewee identifies issues and areas for improvement, "then I put in place strategies to try to address those things, try to move the program, make changes to make things to better address those values and then put in measures." An SES member from a different department explained something similar. "And, as director of the office, I needed to absorb a lot of information from my staff, from my external customers, Congress, the agencies, Administration. I had to form my own conclusions at some point. We couldn't debate things endlessly. I say, 'Okay, these are the things we're taking to our board members.'"

One SES member expressed an interesting idea that directly touches on one's responsibilities to one's supervisors, position, and subordinates: "You don't lie. You maintain flexibility here, and you constrain flexibility or at least eliminate ambiguity at the state and local level because they need to know precisely what's expected of them and what their limits are in terms of creativity and freelancing."

The issue of public responsibilities refers to the responsibilities to ethics, regulations, and accountability expected of public administrators, formally and informally. A big part of administrators' public responsibilities involve the fact that "you're spending other people's money." Therefore, one must maintain "being a good steward of public money, accountability, and transparency in decision-making."

Social/philosophical responsibilities refer to personal understandings of the responsibilities one has to one's public, one's work, one's position, and one's ideals. One interviewee provided a perfect example of such responsibilities.

> I do firmly believe that those who benefit from what I think is a
> remarkable economic system and a remarkable political system, at some
> level, have some responsibility to those who by no fault of their own aren't
> as blessed. There's a little bit of a religious thing here. I do feel that
> society is – should be – judged or measured on the way in which it treats
> its poor, its widowed, and its orphans. And, I think we in this agency, we
> have that spirit, that soul, if you will, in the work that we do. I think that
> pretty much sums it up.

A different interviewee identified a personal social/philosophical responsibility that the interviewee seeks to continuously fulfill. "I guess, to me, personally, one of the most important things is that whenever you are developing policy or running any kind of program, whatever you are doing, you have to feed the client as a part of that process. If you aren't looking at the client when you're doing it, then you don't know what you're

doing." Administrators must be well informed of policy, the administration of policy,

and the citizens one serves in order to ensure that they are performing responsibly and

effectively.

Lastly, these three categories of responsibilities tie together into public

administrators' responsibilities for making decisions and for the consequences of their

decisions. This occurs at the organizational level. "One has to be aware of how what

you do or say in a public setting would be interpreted – for example, in a USDA policy

document." Additionally, this tying together of responsibilities in decision making and

consequences also occurs at the public level. Segments of society are directly and

indirectly impacted, positively or negatively, by administrators' decisions and actions.

Table 9: Defining the Focused Codes within "The Individual"

Focused Code	Definition
Individual Sovereignty and Relevance	"Individual sovereignty and relevance" addresses the instances expressed by interviewees in which they found themselves to be able to have their say and forge their own path despite the constraints around them. Additionally, instances in which the interviewees were not simply "cogs in the machine" added to their senses of relevance within the work of the government and of public administration in general. This focused code differs from bureaucratic sovereignty by way of the interviewees expressions of personal control, authority, and relevance. Bureaucratic sovereignty expresses a similar idea as individual sovereignty but at an organizational level. Individual sovereignty, as the word "individual" suggests, identifies the personal and individual nature of one's experienced sovereignty and resulting relevance.
Perseverance, Satisfaction, and Meaning	"Perseverance, satisfaction, and meaning" refers to the experiences, attitudes, and opinions expressed by the interviewees in which they state that despite the lack of finish lines within their work; despite the legal, budgetary, organizational, and personal limitations they confront; despite the presence of a public who rarely seems to understand or appreciate their work; and despite the constant political and issue evolution and change in which they work, there is value in perseverance. They express a value and/or need to persevere in

	order to do good for society and to make a difference. Regardless of the discouraging aspects of their administrative predicaments and the motivating aspects of their administrative predicaments, the interviewees expressed and advocated senses of perseverance. This perseverance involves expressions of personal motivations for continuing to work and to serve within their positions. They do so despite occasional episodes of frustration and conflicting feelings. They find satisfaction in their work and consider their efforts of doing the best that they can, considering their circumstances to be worthwhile.
Responsibility	"Responsibility" addresses the role and significance responsibility plays within the work and experience of public administrators. As a public administrator, one faces a field of responsibilities: organizational responsibilities, public responsibilities, and social/philosophical responsibilities. Additionally, public administrators face the responsibilities of being held accountable for their decisions and for the consequences of their decisions.

4.5 The Sisyphusian Predicament

The work of government, the work of public administration, does not have a clear – at the macro level, does not have an end. You know, you take care of a health issue, a public health issue; other public health issues are going to come along. You deal with a particular crisis, an international crisis; another one's going to come along. . . . So to that extent, you can say, 'Well, my God, we haven't solved all the problems. There are still problems to be confronted in the public administration arena, problems that the country faces that we're supposed to be helping.' And so, to that extent, it's like 'When does it stop?' Well, it stops when you're no longer part of the mix. It stops when you're dead. But, people . . . would be horribly depressed if the idea was – if the notion was 'That means that what I do really doesn't have any meaning because there's going to be additional problems; that rock's going to come back down.' In public administration, I suspect in other aspects of human endeavor, you take satisfaction with having gotten that rock up to the top in the first place, even if it does flip back down. It's like 'My short-term goal is to get through today, to do something constructive, to solve this immediate problem.' And, you solve that immediate problem; you feel good about it. 'I got people together; we reached a decision.' So I don't – you know, I don't know any effective manager or employee, public employee, out there who is operating effectively with the impression that, 'Well, it really doesn't matter what I do.' You create meaning.

During the course of this grounded theory analysis, the open coding of the SES members' interviews led to the formation of focused codes. The terms used as open codes were raised to categorical and theoretical levels through constant comparison. The resulting focused codes could do more than simply identify ideas and concepts within the interviews. They could identify, define, and describe such ideas and concepts in broader conceptual statements. The focused codes, based on similarities, differences, relevancies, utilities, and theoretical imports, clumped together and formed categories/themes within the interview information. As such the categories/themes of "the environment," "the work," and "the individual" were able to contextualize and describe the primary themes and theoretical concepts within the interview information. Finally, once again, by way of constant comparison, a unifying core category/theme emerged that could inductively consolidate the main ideas and issues within the interviews. This core category/theme is "the Sisyphusian predicament."

"The Sisyphusian predicament" provides a broad, unifying framework for contextualizing, understanding, and describing the environments, the work, and the experiences of the SES members who participated in this research. This core category/theme can be used, through metaphorical and theoretical connections, to describe the aspects of the environments in which public administrators exist and work, the work conditions and work tasks of public administrators, and the individual relevancies and experiences of public administrators.

The core category/theme "the Sisyphusian predicament" theoretically and thematically threads together the categories/themes within the interviews. "The Sisyphusian predicament" involves "the environment," the predicament Sisyphus is in by

way of the gods, the mountain, and the boulder; "the work," Sisyphus's repetitive toil of pushing the boulder and returning to the bottom of the mountain in order to do it again; and "the individual," Sisyphus reflecting on himself and on his work as he pushes the boulder and as he walks back down the mountain to get the boulder. The existential condition of this predicament, and of the interviewees' predicaments metaphorically connected to Sisyphus's by way of the categories/themes and their focused codes, becomes apparent by way of connecting existential elements present within Camus's interpretation of the myth of Sisyphus with those of the interviewees working as members of the SES.

Therefore, one can see examples of existential elements in both Sisyphus's predicament and in the predicaments of the SES members. Within the examples below, despite the main idea each example demonstrates, there are obvious overlappings of existential elements within the examples. The primary definitive aspects of "the Sisyphusian predicament" as a category/theme are never-endingness; boundedness; finite activity and experience in the midst of enormity and infinitude; scope and scale of one's intentions within the boundaries of one's contexts; individual experience and personal relevance, significance, and meaning generation; and "the rebel" and microemancipation. These aspects of "the Sisyphusian predicament" are not focused codes or categories/themes from previous levels of grounded theory analysis. They are the resultant characteristics of the inductively emergent core category/theme. The following paragraphs discuss these resultant characteristics. Table 10 presents "the Sisyphusian predicament's" definitive characteristics.

Table 10: Definitive Characteristics of "The Sisyphusian Predicament"

Definitive Characteristics	Core Category/Theme
• Never-Endingness • Boundedness • Finite Activity and Experience in the Midst of Enormity and Infinitude • Scope and Scale of One's Intentions within the Boundaries of One's Contexts • Individual Experience and Personal Relevance, Significance, and Meaning Generation • "The Rebel" and Microemancipation	The Sisyphusian Predicament

In their various tasks, SES members and Sisyphus encounter and experience similar existential elements. Both parties participate in work that involves never-endingness and recursive practices. Sisyphus's and public administrators' work is never-ending in that labor will always have to be performed, but it's also recursive in that the work "can repeat itself indefinitely or until a specified condition is met" (Webster, 1990, p. 985). This allows for Sisyphus's and the SES members' temporary accomplishments that occur during the otherwise never-ending processes of work. Discussing the repetitive, ongoingness of one's work, one SES member from the FAA suggested, "It's almost like a never-ending battle, where you wish you could cross a finish line and be done with it. But, it's like – we used to laugh: Every time you know the answers, they change all the questions."

Despite the macro-level never-endingness of governmental work that transcends all of the interviews, all of the interviewees acknowledged little, incremental accomplishments/victories that occur within their day-to-day work. However, all of them

also acknowledge that there will always be work to do. Such instances could be viewed as instances of Alvesson and Willmott's (1992) notion of microemancipation.

> I think that very few of our programs have, you know, you're addressing the problem and suddenly it's over; you're finished. Certainly not in my programs because there are all ongoing kinds of expectations. We're never going to have no injuries. But, certainly my colleagues in OSHA and injury where their goal is to improve safety, that's just one safe and health work place, you never get to the place where there aren't any safety and health issues. That's just not going to happen. Arguably, you could come to the programs in government, your job is to correct a shortage of training in a particular area, and you could do all the training for that particular group and have it come to an end. That's not to say that that's impossible. But as a rule, that's not the way the government works.

Both Sisyphus and the interviewees experience varying degrees of boundedness within the confines of their work, the options available to them, the authority and influence of outside sources, and the confined degrees of sovereignty. In such bounded contexts, "the best you can do in those circumstances is just to keep plugging away and try to correct obvious errors where you see them and where you can determine that you've gone astray, you go back to another thing. I don't see that there's really an escape from that." This interviewee goes on to explain that this idea is the result of human finitude – human boundedness. "If we had a perfect view, we could kind of step out into the universe and look from 30,000 feet or three million miles and see all the interrelationships and have this answer, completely omniscient understanding of what's going on. Then, we wouldn't make all these mistakes, but that's not who we are. We are limited individuals operating in a lot of uncertainty."

Additionally, Sisyphus and the SES members participate in finite activity and experience in the midst of enormity and infinitude. This can be seen in a quote as simple as "It's just the day-to-day getting through the day." One comes in, does one's work, and

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retires, all the time aware of all that's out there left to be done. Therefore, another

interviewee states, "I think a lot of us are motivated by a – or a lot of us take this

approach, and that is you can't do nothing, you have to do something. And if that

something is not totally satisfactory, again, it is better than doing nothing." An SES

member sums up finite activity in the midst of enormity and infinitude this way,

> Problems are the nature of life. And, the notion that all problems are only
> – in my view – they're only resolved when you cease breathing; so, yeah, I
> mean, the issue is, as we said earlier, looking at any particular goal or
> value that you're trying to pursue, there are an infinite number of problems
> that can be identified. And, what government is about is trying to figure
> out which are the most critical ones and doing something to address those.
> But, the notion that you resolve them all, that's kind of like – the example
> that comes to my mind, which has nothing to do with my work – is
> immigration. The idea that we're going to somehow stop the flow of
> people and somehow regulate that, and it's going to – all the issues that are
> current in our society about immigration is ludicrous to me. It's just, it
> won't happen until everybody's dead; then, we can control immigration.

Similar to the issue of human finitude in the face of infinitude, Sisyphus and the

SES members encounter and manage the scope and scale of one's intentions within the

boundaries of one's contexts. This topic brings back one of the quotes at the beginning

of this dissertation. "If I see a man armed only with a sword attack a group of machine

guns, I shall consider his act to be absurd. But it is so solely by virtue of the disproportion

between his intention and the reality he will encounter, of the contradiction I notice

between his true strength and the aim he has in view" (Camus, 1955, p. 29). In less

dramatic terms, one of the interviewees addressed how "You can never completely solve

a public administration problem completely. You can go a long way to mitigating it or

minimizing it, but there will always be somebody who doesn't think you've gone far

enough or that some aspect of the problem remains, okay." This idea can be put into

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concrete terms by linking it to food assistance programs. "The issue of hungry people will never be solved. You just want to make sure that each day you do your best to minimize that for any individual family or person out there who may be needing it." An SES member from the MSPB suggests that, in the end, considering the boundedness and contexts in which public workers work, "You got to be motivated by the fact that, look, we're trying to make things better. And nothing stays static. It's not: 'we're going to create the perfect system and structure here, and it's going to operate indefinitely at an extremely high level.' It's life. You have to constantly take care of your changing circumstances."

The perseverance and motivations for both Sisyphus and the SES members illustrate the concepts of individual experience and personal relevance, significance, and meaning generation. In the face of potential meaninglessness and futility, never-ending toil, and finite boundedness, individuals author their senses of relevance, significance, and meaning. Despite its length, a continuation of the statement that begins this section provides an effective example.

> The work of public administration does not have a clear – at the macro
> level, does not have an end. You know, you take care of a health issue, a
> public health issue; other public health issues are going to come along.
> You deal with a particular crisis, an international crisis; another one's
> going to come along. If you are in government long enough, in 34 years, I
> saw cycles. You see, 'Let's centralize activities, and we will have
> economy of scale.' And, then it's like, 'Wow, that doesn't work. We need
> to decentralize this, put the action back, the decision-making back, you
> know, at the subcomponent level where it belongs.' And, then, a few
> years later, 'Yeah, we need to centralize some of this stuff.' So to that
> extent, you can say, 'Well, my God, we haven't solved all the problems.
> There are still problems to be confronted in the public administration
> arena, problems that the country faces that we're supposed to be helping.'
> And so, to that extent, it's like, 'When does it stop?' Well, it stops when
> you're no longer part of the mix. It stops when you're dead. But, people . .

. would be horribly depressed if the idea was – if the notion was, 'That means that what I do really doesn't have any meaning because there's going to be additional problems. That rock's going to come back down.' In public administration, I suspect in other aspects of human endeavor, you take satisfaction with having gotten that rock up to the top in the first place, even if it does flip back down. It's like, 'my short-term goal is to get through today, to do something constructive, to solve this immediate problem.' And, you solve that immediate problem; you feel good about it. 'I got people together; we reached a decision.' So I don't – you know, I don't know any effective manager or employee, public employee, out there who is operating effectively with the impression that, 'Well, it really doesn't matter what I do.' You create meaning. Again, it's the human condition. And so, in one sense, yeah, is government like Sisyphus? Are there going to be new problems? Is that rock going to roll back down? Yeah. Does that demotivate folks? People do get burned out on occasion. It's like, 'Wow, man, I thought I was going to solve the world's problems and the world still has problems.' Yeah, people get burned out. They need to move on to other challenges or do other things in life. But by and large, the 1.9 million civilian employees in government, most of those folks are taking satisfaction that day-to-day they're doing something useful. They're doing something constructive, not every single one of them, but most of them, and taking satisfaction in being motivated. And we continue to strive.

In the end, the image of "the rebel" has thematic and theoretical relevance within this research. This makes sense within "the Sisyphusian predicament" since Camus states that his work interpreting the myth of Sisyphus marks the beginning of an idea that he pursues in his next work, *The Rebel* (Camus, 1955). Within the context of the interview information, the notion of "the rebel" ties into ways in which interviewees can employee individual and bureaucratic sovereignty in order to wrestle with the confines in which they find themselves. An interviewee asserts, "There are a lot of structures (political, legal, social) to keep me in my place, but I take it upon myself to be creative and rebellious and to make my work my own." This type of microemancipation is analogous to Sisyphus's metaphysical revolt against the gods and their punishment. A

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slight extension of the quote that introduces the section on "the individual" is very applicable to this idea.

> It occurred to me that in the last exchange we had -- around my self-characterization as a 'rebel' inside the system -- we may have gotten closest to something that connects up to Sisyphus. I've always had the sense that solutions and progress, rare beasts, occur within the government almost in defiance of the ordained order – that you have to deviate from the prescribed rules to some degree if you ever hope to really accomplish anything. So, you win your little battles, often purposefully below the radar, and notch your belt and go on. You've got your rock, but you play your games around it. Some people think bureaucrats are supposed to be nothing more than automata, scrupulously carrying out Congressional/Administration policy without interpretation or creativity. But, that's impossible, of course, and, in fact, government as we know it would collapse if that legalistic model actually obtained – if for no other reason than that life is too complex for the law and regulations to cover everything. The fun part is in dealing with all the extrapolations and interpolations and wiggle room, and trying to use a pitifully small lever to slide the whole ungainly mass a few inches in the proper direction – often against its will.

Concluding Comments on the Results Chapter

This results chapter has identified, defined, and illustrated the three categories/themes that emerged during the grounded theory analysis. They included "the environment," "the work," and "the individual." Then, this chapter discussed the core category/theme "the Sisyphusian predicament." In doing so, this chapter explained the ways in which "the Sisyphusian Predicament" provides a unifying theoretical framework for understanding and describing the environments, work, and experiences expressed within the SES members' interviews. Now that this dissertation has discussed the literature associated with this research, the methodology for performing this research, and the results of the research's use of grounded theory analysis, the next chapter provides a

discussion of existentialism and public work, based on the results of the grounded theory

analysis.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to contribute a new theoretical understanding of the experience and practice of public administration. In order to do so, this research was interested in discovering whether or not an existential theoretical framework could emerge that would help practitioners and scholars of public administration understand and describe the experience and practice of public administration. Up to this point, scholars have not authored an existential theory of public administration. This dissertation sought to initiate work in that direction. Therefore, in light of the results from this research's grounded theory analysis, presented in the previous chapter, this chapter explicates an emergent existential theoretical framework of public administration based on the core category/theme "the Sisyphusian predicament" and its lower level categories/themes "the environment," "the work," and "the individual."

In order to explicate and illustrate an existential theoretical framework of public administration, this chapter does the following. First, this chapter revisits this dissertation's research purpose and research questions. The next section identifies and explains the components of an existential theoretical framework of public administration. The third section concludes the chapter by addressing the application and utility of an existential theoretical framework for understanding and describing public administration.

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5.1 Existentialism and Public Administration

5.1.1 Research Purpose

Public administration and public administrators are in the position of having to address public, social issues that various competing and aligning groups of interested parties have determined to be important enough and meaningful enough to address. The political, social, and environmental aspects of policy problem recognition, policy formulation, policy administration, and policy evaluation complicate efforts to address public issues. There seems to be no agreed upon universally objective ways of remedying anything. Everything is up for argument and perspectival incongruity. The same goes for evaluating efforts to resolve public issues. Attempting to solve one set of public problems often creates other connected problems or problematic unintended consequences.

Therefore, to all of those involved, citizens, administrators, and policymakers, there will always be problems. There will always be work to do. Accordingly, there will most likely be some systems in place in which people can choose to make sense of their predicaments, make decisions, and act accordingly. The flip side of this is that there will most likely be some systems in place that will resist other people from making sense of their predicaments, making decisions, and acting accordingly. Public administrators are in the position of living and working within multiple, at times competing, social and organizational structures and systems.

There are numerous theoretical approaches toward understanding public administration. They frequently incorporate theories of organization as well. Well known examples of public administration theory include the rational model of

administration (classical public administration), neo-classical public administration, the human relations movement, new public management, critical social theory, postmodernism, and public choice theory. All of these theories seek to provide better and more integrated understandings of public administration than what individuals might otherwise have. With regard to theory and understanding, Denhardt (2004) suggests, "A theory is not simply an arrangement of facts or values but a thoughtful reconstruction of the way we see ourselves and the world around us. It is a way of making sense of a situation" (Denhardt, 2004, p. 10). Therefore, theory building involves learning new ways of seeing things and, in turn, constructing new realities of life and work experience. This is exactly the intent of this dissertation.

A point of interest for this discussion within the context of public administration became figuring out how one exists within systems that appear only to have arguable finish lines, arguable successes and failures, and arguable best practices. This discussion was also concerned with understanding how one works within such an environment. To accomplish this, a grounded theory methodology was employed to collect information from SES members, to analyze the information for emerging concepts and theoretical relevance, and to construct a theoretical framework for understanding public administrative efforts and the experience of public, bureaucratic life. The grounded theory approach accomplished this by examining the experience and practice of public administrative endeavors, discovering different ways that SES members experience and work within public administrative endeavors, and determining whether or not the elements, forces, and struggles at play within public administrative endeavors could be interpreted, understood, and described within an existential paradigm.

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5.1.2 Research Questions

As stated in the previous chapters, grounded theory is an inductive process that allows one's collected information to lead one's development of a theory/framework (Bowen, 2005; Strauss and Corbin, 1994; and Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This means that one's research will involve broad, theory generating research questions. These research questions differ from the specific, directional research questions with operationalized variables that lead to deductive hypothesis testing.

The research questions and research interests involved in this dissertation's grounded theoretical research asked if and how an existential theoretical framework could emerge that would help practitioners and scholars of public administration understand and describe the experience and practice of public administration. Accordingly, this research wanted to know how one could theoretically conceptualize such characteristics within the study and practice of public administration. Additionally, this research wanted to discover how existential characteristics play themselves out in the day-to-day and overall activities and experiences of public administrators – SES members specifically.

5.2 An Explication of an Existential Theoretical Framework within Public Administration

The problems public administrators face, and work to manage, are "ill-defined, and they rely upon elusive political judgment for resolution (Not 'solution.' Social problems and never solved. At best they are only re-solved – over and over again.)" (Rittel and Weber, 1973, p. 160). Additionally, public problems are not things in and of

themselves. Public problems are person-made. They are things that concerned individuals and/or groups choose, or happen, to care about, argue about, and, sometimes, work to resolve. The identification and description of public problems is not a rational activity. Problem recognition is interpretive and political (Rittel and Weber, 1973; Stone, 1997; and Wildavsky, 1989). All of these issues played themselves out within the experience and practice of the SES members interviewed during this research.

The core category/theme "the Sisyphusian Predicament" emerged from the interview information as a means for understanding and describing the ways in which and through which SES members experience and respond to their work situations – their work situations being the totality of the environment, the work, and their individual perceptions, experiences, and meanings. Therefore, "the Sisyphusian predicament" can provide the following answers to this dissertation's research questions. "Yes, there are existential characteristics within the experience and practice of public administration that can be understood and described through an existential theoretical framework." They can be seen and conceptualized by way of "the Sisyphusian Predicament" and its three components: "the environment," "the work," and "the individual" and the categories/themes' focused codes. Accordingly, the existential characteristics play themselves out within the day-to-day and overall activities and experiences of the SES members in the ways that "the Sisyphusian predicament" describes the issues administrators must experience and address (never-endingness, boundedness, and finitude in the face of infinitude) and the ways that administrators go about addressing such issues (the choice for metaphysical revolt/microemancipation, managing the scope and scale of one's intentions, and generating and authoring relevance, significance, and meaning).

5.2.1 Conceptualizing Existential Characteristics within the Experience and Practice of

Public Administration

As discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, existentialism is not a

definite, identifiable school of thought and philosophy. Instead, it is more of a movement

with identifiable concerns, themes, and motifs (Gill and Sherman, 1973). This

dissertation defines existential thought and study as a philosophical critique of

dominating paradigms resulting from, and taking place within, the wrestling of

experience and activity in a non-rational and non-teleological world. It would also agree

with Camus and add that existentialism is "a constant confrontation between man and his

own obscurity" (Camus, 1991, p. 54). However, this dissertation would restate this idea

as a constant, or as a come-and-go, confrontation between one and one's own finitude

within a boundedly understandable world and universe.

Working with Camus's notion of absurdity as it relates to existentialism, the

world is not absurd. The absurd, and existentialism, is present within personkind's

relationship to the world. The world is neutral, indifferent. Some people, meanwhile,

seek order and meaning, and they cannot find it. This is the absurd; this is existentialism.

Within the context of this research, public administration involves attempts to find or

create order and meaning in an indifferent world through informing and implementing

public policies and programs. Therefore, public administrative effort can be seen as

existential. Public administration targets public issues. Public issues are contextual,

ever-changing, socially constructed issues. They inherently involve a human context and

human subjectivity (Sartre, 1947). So, it becomes evident that existentialism can provide

a theoretical framework for understanding and describing action toward ever changing

social problems. Existentialism is about the collision of the individual, his or her environment, and his or her work.

The interview information gathered from the SES members provides evidence for the existential predicament of public administrative work and experience. The interview information coded within "the environment" provides examples of the existential role of one's environment on one's work and experience. Also, the interview information coded within "the work" provides clear examples of the collision of the individual, the world, and his or her work. Lastly, interview information coded within "the individual" provides examples of the existential consequences and effects at play within public administrative experience and practice.

5.2.1.a Conceptualizing Existential Characteristics within "The Environment"

The results chapter pointed out that "the environment" provides an arena in which other concepts and themes within the interview information occur. It provides, and includes, contexts for the issues, work, and experiences involved in participating in public work. These contexts are "the world" with which the individual collides while experiencing and practicing public administration. One can identify the existential characteristics within "the environment" by revisiting the category/theme's focused codes: "contextuality," "change and flux," "issues and bureaucrats," "no end," "politics," and "the credulity/incredulity of universally objective understandings and imperatives."

"Contextuality" refers to instances in which the interviewees state that their work, experience, feelings, roles, understandings, degree of sovereignty, etc. are influenced by and/or dependent on the changing properties of their various work activities, assignments,

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environments, and resources. The way one sees oneself, one's responsibilities, and one's work depends on the variables involved in creating specific moments in which one exists. One's context seems to significantly affect one's experience and understanding of doing public administration. Interview information coded within "contextuality" involves moments, activities and experiences, in which there is an obvious human context and human subjectivity at play versus a concrete, knowable, solvable world.

"Change and flux" refers to the ways that interviewees claim that the issues they face, whether they come from the legislature, the courts, the public, or internal environments, are in states of change and flux. Issues come and go, appear and disappear, and/or are defined and redefined constantly. Additionally, instances of solutions creating problems and of unintended consequences illustrate the change and flux within public administration. Interview information coded within "change and flux" demonstrates existential characteristics by way of denying interviewees opportunities for concrete, unifying knowledge and grand-accomplishment.

"Issues and bureaucratic endeavors" refers to the ways in which the interviewees expressed the effects of organizational and political issues on the ways that they experience and perform their work. The issues facing administrators and the impact of the issues on the experience and work of the administrators vary according to who's defining the issues, how the issues are defined, the subjectivity of the issues' definitions and/or measurements, the duration of the issues' relevance and/or attention, and the constant replacing of one issue for another. Interview information coded within "issues and bureaucrats" clearly provides examples of existentialism through the administrators' wrestling of experience and activity in a non-rational and non-teleological world.

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"No end" refers to instances in which the interviewees perceive and express various types of never-endingness within their work. These instances include perceptions regarding the ways in which the work of government will never be finished, the ways in which issues will always arise from somewhere, the ways in which contexts and issues will always be changing, and the ways in which solutions create problems. Interview information coded within "no end" demonstrates the idea of "a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity" (Camus, 1991, p. 54).

"Politics" refers to the extents to which the interviewees claimed to experience the influence of politics within the requirements of their work, the ways they performed their work, what their work addressed, and their experiences of their work. Politics proves to be a way of identifying issues, defining issues, determining what to do about issues, and evaluating work performed on issues. Additionally, the focused code of "politics" addresses the epistemological aspects of politics in which competing politics and rationalities fight to determine the organizational, governmental, and societal realities in which interviewees' work and in which their experiences takes place. Interview information coded within "politics" involves multiple people and parties wrestling with experience and activity in a non-rational and non-teleological world. The interview information clearly demonstrates an inherent involvement of human contexts and human subjectivities, as well.

Lastly, "the credulity/incredulity of objective understandings and imperatives" refers to the ways in which interviewees contemplate and employ ideas on universal imperatives and objectivity. Frequently, interviewees flip-flip between identifying issues, laws, truths, measures, approaches, evaluations, and ideas as being objectively universal

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items or subjectively contextual items. Rarely, if ever, do any interviewees take an epistemological side and stay with it. The flip-flopping between epistemological stances provides a flavorful example of interviewees' wrestling to find or create unifying understandings within a non-rational, non-teleological world.

5.2.1.b Conceptualizing Existential Characteristics within "The Work"

Within the interview information, the category/theme "the work" emerged as a way for organizing, and for referring to, the conditions and activities involved in the interviewees' day-to-day and overall experiences and activities of the interviewees and their organizations. The primary substance of "the work" addresses the constitution of administrative and bureaucratic undertakings. A strong awareness of boundedness and finitude emerges within "the work." Therefore, one can identify the existential characteristics within "the work" by considering the confrontation between one and one's own finitude within an infinite world and universe. The focused codes within this category/theme that best illustrate the existential issues of "the work" are "boundedness," "bureaucratic sovereignty," and "interconnectedness."

"Boundedness" refers to limits on action, awareness, choice, options, position, opinions, sovereignty, etc. that appear within the interviewees statements. It is a focused code for actions, situations, feelings, and/or statements voiced by interviewees in which the individual and/or the situation has anywhere from a small to a large degree and sense of finitude. However, this focused code doesn't suggest determinism or totalitarian deterministic systems. It acknowledges truncated free-will, abbreviated sovereignty, and finite capacities. Interview information coded within "boundedness" admits personkind's

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limitations for achieving an objectively true understanding of an infinite world and universe. Everything can be understood and acted only within a human context and with human subjectivity.

As this discussion addressed "boundedness," even though individuals and organizations experience and operate within their own finitude, this does not necessarily mean that they exist and work within totalitarian deterministic systems. The focused code "bureaucratic sovereignty" refers to the degree of sovereignty that the interviewees suggest exists within the work of their organizations. There are several forces that act to constrain bureaucratic entrepreneurialism, such as rigid legislation, budgets, and legislative oversight, but organizations within the bureaucracy typically experience moments where they can be creative, influential, and, to some extent, sovereign. Therefore, despite their positions, roles, and overall predicaments within their bureaucratic environments, they experience both freedom and subordination. Interview information coded within "bureaucratic sovereignty" provides examples of Camus's (1991) metaphysical revolt and Alvesson and Willmott's (1992) microemancipation at an organizational level.

Lastly, the focused code "interconnectedness" refers to situations and ways expressed by the interviewees in which one's personal and/or one's organizational issues, decisions, actions, and consequences, are not isolated events or episodes. Interconnectedness refers to the ways in which issues and activities interact, influence other issues and activities, and result in consequences for other/a multiplicity of (other) issues and activities. Rarely, if ever, does one issue or activity not affect in some way another related, or totally unrelated, issue or activity. Therefore, to the interviewee,

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attention must be paid to the predicted and unpredicted causes, understandings, and consequences of various issues and activities. Interview information coded within "interconnectedness" clearly addresses the existential topics of choice and consequentiality.

5.2.1.c Conceptualizing Existential Characteristics within "The Individual"

The category "the individual" refers to the personal/human condition of the interviewees as public administrators and as members of the SES. Items within this category address the degrees to which the interviewees experience individual sovereignty and relevance within their day-to-day and overall work lives. Obviously, one's work life can bleed into one's personal life – and even into one's sense of identity. Therefore, the ways in which individuals construct meaning within their lives are involved in this category/theme. Additionally, the category/theme of "the individual" is an important category/theme because it directly addresses what it means to exist within the system – to toil and to persevere in the face of one's work and environments. In doing so, it establishes the potential for individual relevance and significance within what could be considered, from multiple points-of-view, a never-ending, maybe even futile, system. Therefore, "the individual" focuses the interview information on ways in which administrators experience their work and the ways in which their work impacts their lives. Focused codes that contribute to this category/theme and that illustrate its existential characteristics include: "individual sovereignty and relevance," "perseverance, satisfaction, and meaning," and "responsibility."

"Individual sovereignty and relevance" addresses the instances expressed by interviewees in which they found themselves to be able to have their say and forge their own path despite the constraints around them. Additionally, instances in which the interviewees were not simply "cogs in the machine" added to their senses of relevance within the work of the government and of public administration in general. Individual sovereignty, as the word "individual" suggests, identifies the personal and individual constitution of one's experienced sovereignty and resulting relevance. Information coded within "individual sovereignty and relevance" does a great job of illustrating the collision of the individual, his or her environment, and his or her work and the opportunity for metaphysical revolt and microemancipation.

The focused code "perseverance, satisfaction, and meaning" refers to the experiences, attitudes, and opinions expressed by the interviewees in which they state that despite the lack of finish lines within their work; despite the legal, budgetary, organizational, and personal limitations they confront; despite the presence of a public who rarely seems to understand or appreciate their work; and despite the constant political and issue evolution and change in which they work, there is value in perseverance. This perseverance involves expressions of personal motivations for continuing to work and to serve within their positions. They do so despite occasional episodes of frustration and conflicting feelings. They find satisfaction in their work and consider their efforts of doing the best that they can, considering their circumstances to be worthwhile. This is existentially, what Alvesson and Willmott (1992) identify as microemancipation.

Lastly, the focused code "responsibility" addresses the role and significance responsibility plays within the work and experience of public administrators. As a public administrator, one faces a field of responsibilities: organizational responsibilities, public responsibilities, and social/philosophical responsibilities. Additionally, public administrators face the responsibilities of being held accountable for their decisions and for the consequences of their decisions. Therefore, within the context of existentialism, "responsibility" demonstrates the result of individuals making decisions and acting within a world devoid of a universal teleology.

Having conceptualized existential characteristics within the experience and practice of public administration by way of this grounded theory research's categories/themes, the next subsection, 5.2.2, conceptualizes an existential theoretical framework for experiencing and practicing public administration by way of this research's core category/theme "the Sisyphusian predicament." "The Sisyphusian predicament" does so by way of incorporating Camus's (1991) *The Myth of Sisyphus* into this discussion of existentialism and public administration.

5.2.2 The Conceptualization of an Existential Theoretical Framework for the Experience and Practice of Public Administration

The core category/theme "the Sisyphusian predicament" theoretically and thematically threads together the categories/themes within the interviews. "The Sisyphusian predicament" involves "the environment," the predicament Sisyphus is in by way of the gods, the mountain, and the boulder; "the work," Sisyphus's repetitive toil of pushing the boulder and returning to the bottom of the mountain in order to do it again;

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and "the individual," Sisyphus reflecting on himself and on his work as pushes the boulder and as he walks back down the mountain to get the boulder. The existential character of this predicament, and of the interviewees' predicaments metaphorically connected to Sisyphus's by way of the categories/themes and their focused codes, becomes apparent by way of connecting existential elements present within Camus's interpretation of the myth of Sisyphus with those of the interviewees working as members of the SES.

Camus's interpretation of the myth of Sisyphus presents Sisyphus as defying the sting of the gods' punishment of fruitless labor by exercising a metaphysical revolt against his predicament. Much like the SES members interviewed for this dissertation, Sisyphus, through metaphysical revolt, knows that his toil has no end, but by accepting his position, by taking ownership of each ascent up the mountain, the intended punishment of the gods simply becomes the constitution of what Sisyphus is dedicated to doing dutifully. Just because the work has no end does not mean that it should not be performed. Such an idea is synonymous with the attraction to suicide. (After all, as Hank Williams Sr. (1978) says, "No matter how I struggle and strive, I'll never get out of this world alive.") Therefore, revisiting a concept brought up in the second chapter of this dissertation, Alvesson and Willmott's (1992) notion of microemancipation fits well here. As a reminder, one engaged in microemancipation continuously rebels in order to both create opportunities for critical reflection and to counteract the cultural-historical effects of traditions, prejudices, and so on (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, p. 446). Such struggle "portrays the emancipatory idea not as one large, tightly integrated project, but rather as a group of projects, each limited in terms of space, time, and success" (Alvesson

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and Willmott, 1992, p. 446). The opportunities for critical reflection of which Alvesson and Willmott speak show up in Camus's (1991) interpretation of Sisyphus contemplating himself and his situation as he walks back down the mountain in order to retrieve his rock. He is never free from his godly oppressors, but he continuously rebels. Here is the exact activity of all of the interviewees. They recognize little things getting done. They claim and author significance in incremental differences. They use their individual, or finite and contextual, victories to push them onward. Similarly, Camus's Sisyphus takes ownership of his work, gets the rock to the top, and then walks back down to do it again. Clock in; clock out; come back again the next day.

Therefore, Sisyphus's and public administrators' work is both never-ending and recursive. It's never-ending in that labor will always have to be performed, but it's also recursive in that the work "can repeat itself indefinitely or until a specified condition is met" (Webster, 1990, p. 985). This allows for Sisyphus's and the SES members' temporary accomplishments that occur during the never-ending processes of work.

Camus writes, "I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well" (Camus, 1991, p. 123). The word "fidelity" can be confusing here. It might result from translating Camus to English. Nevertheless, fidelity here addresses serving one's duty. By taking ownership of his work, by committing himself to fulfilling his duty, Sisyphus dutifully perseveres despite the idea that this work is eternal and eternally incomplete. This is what is occurring within the work of public administrators. It is their duty to do what they do. They fulfill their duties knowing good and well that once they retire and/or die, there will be some

other bureaucrat coming right in behind them to continue the toil. The government's

work will never end. Goals might be met, issues and goals might fall along the wayside,

programs might end or be modified, Administrations will come and go, but the macro-

level ever-present work will persist. Therefore, one can see examples of existential

elements in both Sisyphus's predicament and in the predicaments of the SES members.

Having described and discussed the categories/themes and the core

category/theme, this discussion now turns to articulating the resultant existential

theoretical framework that emerged from the interviews with the SES members. The

characteristics within "the environment," "the work," and "the individual" interact with

one another in order to match, and create, the definitive elements of the "the Sisyphusian

predicament." As mentioned in the previous chapter, the primary definitive aspects of

"the Sisyphusian predicament" as a category/theme are never-endingness, boundedness,

finite activity and experience in the midst of enormity and infinitude, scope and scale of

one's intentions within the boundaries of one's contexts, individual experience and

personal relevance, significance, and meaning generation, and "the rebel" and

microemancipation. These aspects of "the Sisyphusian predicament" are not focused

codes or categories/themes from previous levels of grounded theory analysis. They are

the resultant characteristics of the inductively emergent core category/theme. By

addressing the ways in which the various, but sometimes related, concepts and themes

from each category/theme interact through "the Sisyphusian predicament," this

constitutes an existential theoretical framework of public administration.

Figure 1 illustrates an existential theoretical framework for understanding and

describing the experience and practice of public administration. This theoretical

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framework provides a conceptual map that links both empirical and phenomenological information from the interviews with SES members to the three conceptual and theoretical categories/themes, which can be used to organize the interview information. The map then makes connections to the emergent, unifying theoretical core category/theme. The theoretical relevance of each of "the Sisyphusian predicament's" definitive elements is discussed below.

Figure 2: An Existential Theoretical Framework – The Sisyphusian Predicament

Interview Information

Senior Executive Service Members

- Department of Labor
- Department of Transportation - Federal Aviation Administration
- Merit Systems Protection Board
- United States Department of Agriculture #1
- United States Department of Agriculture #2
- United States Department of Agriculture Human Resources

Emergent Categories/Themes and Their Focused Codes

The Environment

- Contextuality
- Change and Flux
- Issues and Bureaucrats
- No End
- Politics
- Presence of the Public
- The Credulity/Incredulity of Universally Objective Understandings and Imperatives

The Work

- Boundedness
- Bureaucratic Sovereignty
- Communication and Exchange
- Interconnectedness
- Proximity to the Mission

The Individual

- Individual Sovereignty and Relevance
- Perseverance, Satisfaction, and Meaning
- Responsibility

Emergent Core Category/Theme and Its Definitive Elements

The Sisyphusian Predicament

- Never-Endingness
- Boundedness
- Finite Activity and Experience in the Midst of Enormity and Infinitude
- Scope and Scale of One's Intentions within the Boundaries of One's Contexts
- Individual Experience and Personal Relevance, Significance, and Meaning Generation
- "The Rebel" and Microemancipation

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5.2.2.a Never-Endingness

The issue of "never-endingness" is a concept that pervades the focused codes and categories/themes within this grounded theory research. The theoretical relevance of "never-endingness" within this framework is important. All of the SES members' experiences and activities take place within the never-endingness of public administration. The experience and involvement with the never-endingness of public work, which is analogous to Sisyphus's raising of the rock, puts public administrators in the position of working and existing without grand-finish lines. There will always be work to do.

5.2.2.b Boundedness

Similarly to "never-endingness," the issue of "boundedness" reappears throughout this research. Every SES member acknowledged numerous ways in which something within his or her environment ("the environment"), his or her job ("the work"), and even within him or herself ("the individual") bound him or her with regard to what he or she was allowed to do, able to do, or even able to think to do. Public administrators, and perhaps one could say personkind, are limited through mortality, intellect, and a host of societal, structural, legal, contextual, paradigmatic boundaries. As such, sovereignty, decisions, and able action can be imagined and/or manifested in only bounded ways. This condition is analogous to that of Sisyphus's boundedness of rock, mountain, and task.

5.2.2.c Finite Activity and Experience in the Midst of Enormity and Infinitude

Whether it is due to legal constraints, intellectual constraints, budgetary constraints, or whatever, public activity and experience occur finitely in the midst of a universe of possibilities and ideas that is infinite. The finitude of the human, and bureaucratic/organizational, condition can conceive of ideas of the infinite, but such ideas are truly more about enormity due to the inability of a finite mind to be able to grasp and understand infinitude. This idea is by no means new within public administration. Simon (1945/1997) covered a great deal of theoretical ground when he articulated his understanding of bounded rationality.

In the case of SES members within this research, "finite activity and experience in the midst of enormity and infinitude" appeared to be a bit of a mixed blessing. The finite activities and experiences provided a degree of stability and predictability to their work and to the experience of their work. However, they all knew that an infinite number of issues that they could identify and address within the jurisdictions of their departments and agencies were slipping by them or remaining out of reach and/or unconsidered. Also, they all knew that the work of public administration would never end.

5.2.2.d Scope and Scale of One's Intentions within the Boundaries of One's Contexts

"Scope and scale of one's intentions within the boundaries of one's contexts" is similar to "finite activity and experience in the midst of enormity and infinitude." However, the resultant theoretical significance of this element within the existential framework is markedly different. "Scope and scale of one's intentions within the

boundaries of one's contexts" impacts the value, relevance, and significance of one's efforts to address the issues of public administrative work.

Recall Camus's (1991) quote about the swordsman and the machine gun nest. The idea of one person with a sword taking on a nest of machine gunners is not absurd. As Camus points out, the absurd lies within "the disproportion between his intention and the reality he will encounter, of the contradiction that I notice between his true strength and the aim he has in view" (Camus, 1991, p. 29).

Understanding and managing the scope and scale of one's intentions, efforts, and/or ideas within the boundaries of one's contexts allows for relevancy and significance – if those are of interest to public administrators. If Sisyphus's goal was to get that boulder to the top once and for all, his work would be futile. But, since he commits himself to the duty of continuously raising the rock, his work is not futile and/or fruitless. He continues to fulfill his duty over and over. As this dissertation states in chapter 2, and as was discovered within the interviews, public administration and its attendant existential action are commitments to work that public administrators know will never end. Without this awareness of the absurd, public administration's work would be fruitless, unrewarding. Instead, "the struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (Camus, 1991, p. 123). McSwite agrees. "Public service presents the absurdity of the human condition, and demands at the same time that it be accepted and dealt with – effectively. The payoff for meeting this challenge is a meaningful life, a sense that you have learned something, and that you are better off in heart and soul at the end than you were in the beginning" (McSwite, 2002, p. 97).

5.2.2.e Individual Experience and Personal Relevance, Significance, and Meaning Generation

Despite the existential conditions in which one exists, works, and experiences, one can, if one so cares to and/or chooses to, author one's own relevance, significance, and meaning by way of one's metaphysical revolt or exercise of microemancipation. One is always going to be in some system. The deontological ought to liberate the individual is futile and arguably counter to existential thought. Metaphysical revolt and microemancipation provide for continuous opportunities for small victories that, although not liberating from the system, keeps one from being passively dominated by systems.

5.2.2.f "The Rebel" and Microemancipation

The element "'the rebel' and microemancipation" provides a choice of response to one's predicament. One can rebel against one's condition and predicament and challenge the never-endingness, boundedness, and finitude of one's work and experience by way of metaphysical revolt and microemancipation. "'The rebel' and microemancipation" provides the mechanism that facilitates "individual experience and personal relevance, significance, and meaning generation."

Camus's interpretation of Sisyphus provides an analogous example of both metaphysical revolt and microemancipation.

> At the very end of his long effort measured by skyless space and time
> without depth, the purpose is achieved. Then, Sisyphus watches the stone
> rush back down in a few moments toward that lower world whence he
> will have to push it up again toward the summit. He goes back down to
> the plain. It is during that return, that pause, that Sisyphus interests me. .
> . . I see that man going back down with a heavy yet measured step toward
> the torment of which he will never know the end. That hour like a

breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks toward the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. . . . One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks (Camus, 1991, pp. 120-123).

This proposed existential theoretical framework, discussed in section 5.2, offers a

conceptual, theoretical, and thematic map that facilitates understanding and describing

the experiences and activities of public administrators. The emergence and generation of

this grounded theoretical framework suggests that there are important aspects to the day-

to-day and overall lived experiences and practices of public administrators that apply to

an existential framework. These aspects can be organized by way of "the environment,"

"the work," and "the individual." "The Sisyphusian predicament" provides a way of

incorporating the day-to-day and overall experiences and activities into a unified

understanding of the general predicament, or state, of public administrators – specifically

SES members. Now that section 5.2 has identified, defined, and discussed the various

components of the proposed existential theoretical framework for understanding and

describing public administration, section 5.3 moves into discussing the application and

utility of the framework for public administration scholars and practitioners.

5.3 The Application and Utility of an Existential Theoretical Framework within Public Administration

As this section discusses the application and utility of an existential theoretical

framework, it is clearly understood that the importance and relevance of the various

categories/themes and the definitive elements of the core category/theme vary across

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contexts. The theoretical framework itself brings attention to that idea. Additionally, the intent of the existential theoretical framework of public administration is not to predict behaviors and explain phenomena. The framework is interpretive. Its intent is to understand and to describe experiences and behaviors. This is in keeping with its existentialism. To Camus "it's not a matter of explaining and solving, but of experiencing and describing" (Camus, 1991, p. 94).

Some of this research's applications and utility were proposed within chapters one and two of this dissertation while addressing the purpose for this research and its theoretical links. Those ideas were expanded, and new ideas regarding application and utility revealed themselves during the course of the grounded theory research. There are both scholarly and practicable applications and utility to this grounded theory research's existential theoretical framework. Likewise, this research is relevant to both public administration specifically and to organization studies generally.

Importantly, this study has contributed to the literature by producing introductory, exploratory work toward developing a new theoretical alternative within the literature of public administration, and, arguably, organizations. By reflecting on this existential theoretical framework, scholars and practitioners will have more, and at times potentially better, ways of reading and understanding public work.

Along with helping to produce a new theoretical avenue for approaching the study and practice of public administration, this grounded existential theoretical framework also contributes a number of specific applications and utilities. Existentialism's repudiation of any body of belief's adequacy facilitates a plurality of competing schools of thought wherein epistemological and methodological approaches could be selected on

the basis of context and utility. This idea plays out within issues of decision making, evaluation, and research. Accordingly, such a framework could also be applied to the theory and practice of public administration as a means for encouraging discourse and multiculturalism. Lastly, it concentrates efforts away from unobtainable utopias and can focus scholars and practitioners onto contextually possible and relevant routes of activity and study.

5.3.1 Contributions to the Literature

This dissertation's contributions to the current body of public administration literature occur in the following ways: first, this existential theoretical framework applies to understanding and describing the experience and work of public administration theoretically and metaphorically. Second, it provides an alternative theoretical approach for viewing and understanding organizational processes within public organizations. Third, an existential theoretical framework can facilitate a degree of reconciliation between the competing approaches to pragmatism within public administration. This could in turn nurture the significance and relevance of pragmatism within public administration.

5.3.1.a Metaphor and Theory for Understanding

This research's existential theoretical framework results from the research's core category/theme "the Sisyphusian predicament." The unifying theoretical value of this core category/theme involves the metaphorical application of the myth of Sisyphus to understand and describe the experience and practice of public administrators.

Morgan's (1997 and 2006) discussion of narratives and metaphor helps scholars and practitioners gain greater understandings of their organizational environments and realities. Morgan presents metaphor as a method of inquiry and understanding in a way that appeals to a multiplicity of views for analyzing organizational reality (Hollar, 2008). The use of metaphor as a method of inquiry and understanding necessitates finding and using metaphors that provide "appropriate ways of seeing, understanding, and shaping the situations with which they have to deal" (Morgan, 2006, p. 338; and 1997, p. 348). As such, scholars and practitioners must employ metaphors that allow them to read their environments and organizations. Therefore, the use of a metaphorical awareness in their work will permit them to read the narratives taking place within their work and study. "By being able to recognize different elements of their agencies' actions, policies, and methods through different perspectives, individuals and groups will gain richer, deeper understandings of their discipline and situations (Morgan, 2006/1997)" (Hollar, 2008, p. xxx).

In addition to its theoretical components and value presented in this dissertation, "the Sisyphusian predicament" provides a rich metaphor for inquiry and understanding. As previously pointed out, the categories/themes within this dissertation's grounded theoretical framework metaphorically connect with the myth of Sisyphus. The predicament Sisyphus is in by way of the gods, the mountain, and the boulder matches the category/theme "the environment" of the SES members. Sisyphus's repetitive toil of pushing the boulder and returning to the bottom of the mountain in order to do it again connects with the conceptual items within the category/theme "the work." Sisyphus reflecting on himself and on his work as he pushes the boulder and as he walks back

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down the mountain to get the boulder matches the category/theme "the individual," as articulated within this research. Lastly, by way of the core/category theme "the Sisyphusian predicament," the interviewees' predicaments, metaphorically connected to Sisyphus's, become apparent by way of connecting existential elements present within Camus's interpretation of the myth of Sisyphus with those of the interviewees working as members of the SES.

5.3.1.b An Alternative Approach to Modeling Organizational Processes within Public Administration

In Denhardt's (2004) *Theories of Public Organizations*, Denhardt outlines various approaches to understanding key organizational processes within public organizations. The key processes he identifies are ways of knowing, ways of deciding, and ways of acting. He chooses to compare the organizational processes of the rational model of administration, the interpretive model of administration, and the critical model of administration.

Table 11 below outlines the general aspects of the rational model of administration, the interpretive model of administration, and the critical model of administration. Below Denhardt's table, a modified version of Denhardt's table (table 12) includes an interpretation of what an existential theoretical model would look like in comparison to these three popular theories of public administration. The arrows within the tables signify what Denhardt suggests are the reasons the models have for discovering knowledge. "Whereas the rational model seeks knowledge in order to control, the interpretive model seeks understanding on which communication can be built, and the

critical model seeks emancipation from the social constraints that limit our growth and development" (Denhardt, 2004, p. 195-196).

Table 11: Denhardt's (2004) Three Models of Administration Viewed in Terms of Three Organizational Processes

	Rational Model	Interpretive Model	Critical Model
Ways of Knowing	Positive social science ↓ Control	Interpretive theory, phenomenology ↓ Understanding	Critical social theory ↓ Emancipation
Ways of Deciding	Rational decision-making process	Emotive-intuitive	Value-critical
Ways of Acting	Instrumental action	Expressive action	Educative action (praxis)

(Denhardt, 2004. P. 194)

Table 12: An Existential Model of Administration in Comparison to Other Models of Administration

	Rational Model	Interpretive Model	Critical Model	Existential Model
Ways of Knowing	Positive social science ↓ Control	Interpretive theory, phenomenology ↓ Understanding	Critical social theory ↓ Emancipation	A plurality of theoretical approaches ↓ Meaning and/or Reality Construction
Ways of Deciding	Rational decision-making process	Emotive-intuitive	Value-critical	Political, Discursive, Imaginative, and/or Experiential
Ways of Acting	Instrumental action	Expressive action	Educative action (praxis)	Generative Action

(Modified Denhardt, 2004. P. 194)

Regarding ways of knowing, the existential model seeks knowledge for meaning and/or reality construction. Based on the experiences, competing epistemologies, and competing points of view, individuals and organizations seek to create an understanding of their personal and organizational meanings and/or realities. This discussion includes "and/or" because those knowably within an existential paradigm do not require a conventional sense of personal or organizational meaning.

The existential model's ways of deciding are multifaceted. This is due to "the credulity/incredulity of universally objective understandings and imperatives" within the existential paradigm. Therefore, everything is up for argument and debate – including the formats for having such arguments and debates. Based on the contexts of the decision making moments, the individual or parties involved could end up making decisions in all sorts of ways. Political, discursive, imaginative, and experiential ways of deciding are good summaries of the typical ways and formats for making decisions within an existential model of administration.

Lastly, the existential model's ways of acting is generative action. Generative action is action intended to generate, maintain, strengthen, counter, etc. the individual or organizational self-concept and understandings of reality. This too is dependent on context. Typically, individuals and organizations will participate in action that maintains their self-concepts and understandings of reality. When contexts cause self-concepts and understandings of reality to begin to change, individuals and organizations might act in ways that try to bolster their challenged self-concepts and understandings of reality. However, the opposite can be true as well. Sometimes, individuals and organizations will act in ways that generate new or modified self-concepts and understandings of reality.

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Interestingly, there are obvious opportunities for there to be conflicting ways of acting between individuals and organizations.

5.3.1.c Existentialism and Pragmatism within Public Administration

As presented in this dissertation, existential theory within public administration provides a way of viewing public administrative efforts with an awareness of the relativity of, and the continuous changes in, public issues. Additionally, an existential theory within public administration addresses the importance of consequentiality as the effects of decisions and actions in particular environments or moments in turn affect/frame future problem recognition and decision making environments or moments. This all takes place by way of existentialism's understanding of individuals and societies making decisions and implementing decisions in the absence of any universally objective understandings and imperatives.

The existential theoretical framework discovered during this research shares a good bit with pragmatism. Items within the framework's core/category theme and subordinate categories/themes address interest in, and the significance of, action, experience, and contextualism within public administrative endeavors. However, the existential theoretical framework does not fall prey to the same epistemological problems that have evidenced themselves within pragmatic public administration.

History, culture, and politics reconstitute deconstructed grand narratives into reconstructed personal narratives – realistically co-authored by local narratives. As such, the existential pragmatist says, "Who gives a dern about, say, correspondence theory? 'Classical' pragmatists and 'neo-pragmatists,' and any other groups with

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incommensurable epistemologies, are just going to paradigmatically speak past each other anyway." Accordingly, the modernist, "classical" pragmatist sees the "neo-pragmatist" as irrelevant to life-world moments, and the "neo-pragmatist" sees the "classical" pragmatist as naïve to the ingredients of problems facing public administrators. The blind men in the elephant analogy (Shields, 2003, 2004, and 2005) do indeed miss out on the "majesty" of the elephant (Miller, 2004b and 2005) – "majesty" reflecting an internal and/or social perception of the elephant.

As the next subsection discusses, the pragmatic existentialist, while being aware of those paradigmatic battles, worries not about such epistemological differences, since there is no meaning or purpose outside of one's awareness/reconstruction of meaning and purpose to determine one side in a battle to be the undisputed champion. Instead, the pragmatic existentialist concentrates on the politically discursive outcomes of recognizing "problems," determining options, and implementing actions aimed at resolution. The floor is always open for advocates of individual causes/interests to place "old" problems back onto the agenda, put "new" problems onto the agenda, or to suggest that public effort had never adequately addressed the original issue in the first place.

5.3.2 Decision Making, Evaluation, and Research

An existential theoretical framework within public administration creates consequences for the ways in which decision making, evaluation, and research are understood and exercised. These consequences result from the "boundedness" and "the credulity/incredulity of universally objective understandings and imperatives" introduced within the framework. The epistemology of existentialism opens up the playing field of

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"correct" ways of knowing and inquiring to all systems of thinking and investigation. Kaufman (1956) describes the essence of existentialism as "the refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and remote from life – that is the heart of existentialism" (Kaufmann, 1956, p. 12). The existential repudiation of any approach's adequacy leaves individuals free to roam amongst various schools of thought based on the contexts in which they are participating in decision making, evaluation, and/or research.

The previous subsection introduced an idea that plays itself out within an existential theoretical framework for understanding and describing experiences and practices within public administration. Existential theory allows for legitimate debate amongst epistemological approaches because existentialism recognizes individual/group contexts. Individuals only have an understanding of "purpose" and reality dependent on their experience and the way that they process their experiences through their cultural historical socialization and setting. Therefore, people can argue what they believe, and people can expect or not expect others to accept or not accept their approach to issues. However, there are no universally objective understandings or imperatives to appeal to with one's arguments. Arguments must win out within the contexts, concerns, and persuasions of those involved. They cannot be closed by citing some supposedly end-all capital T truth – unless, of course, all of those participating in the discussion choose to do so. Therefore, existential theory allows for a multi-pronged approach to public issues. It permits discourse in and amongst academic, practitioner, and political circles.

5.3.3 Discourse and Multiculturalism

The plurality of schools of thought coexisting on an epistemological and methodological playing field has consequences and utility in ways additional to those presented above. An existential theoretical framework concerning the experience and practice of public administration would acknowledge that people participating within various systems would most likely author and edit personal and cultural meanings. Therefore, an existential theoretical framework could act as a theoretical venue for facilitating contextual, deliberative discourse amongst such participants. In doing so, participants have numerous opportunities and means for generating, modifying, and/or eliminating discursively determined public problems, resolutions, efforts, and evaluative standards of temporal success or failure.

One could assume that the discursive application and utility of an existential theoretical framework would also apply to contexts concerning multiculturalism. Depending on how individuals and organizations applied an existential theoretical awareness of public administration within their contexts, the existential theoretical framework could be used to ameliorate multicultural differences and potential conflicts of competing belief systems. No person or group has the upper hand within cultural, political, and administrative issues, questions, and contests as a result of connections to Truth or Reality. Obviously, individuals and groups with money, access, and influence would still have an upper hand as a result of such financial, symbolic, and political capital. However, an existential theory within public administration could inform participants that their ideas, understandings, sense of right and wrong, sense of ought,

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best practices, etc., are not based on some objectifiable, testable, universal standard. They're personal and/or corporate interpretations of socialized local narratives.

5.3.4 Unobtainable Utopias versus Contextual Possibilities and Relevance

An existential theoretical framework for the experience and practice of public administration facilitates scholars and practitioners to move away from the pursuit of unobtainable utopias. One interviewee even stated, "To solve all problems, government would have to control all resources. This would result in a mix of utopia and fear." The work of public administration is never-ending. There are no universal, identifiable finish lines for evaluating successful policy and administrative efforts (Rittel and Webber, 1973). Problems are the foci of public administrative work. Additionally, public problem identification and explanation results from competing groups within particular and individually experienced contexts. Interested parties compete for ways to define, act on, and evaluate these public problems. As the late comedian Mitch Hedberg pointed out, "'You can't make all of the people happy all of the time.' And, last night, all of those people were at my show" (Hedberg, 1999/2003). Therefore, solutions to public problems are not true-or-false (Rittel and Webber, 1973). Instead, they are determined to be good-or-bad in specific local and historical contexts.

Accordingly, an existential theoretical framework for the experience and practice of public administration facilitates scholars and practitioners to shed the ideal of some sort of liberation from the systems in which they toil. There will always be problems; there will always be work to be done; there will always be some system in place in which people can choose to make sense of their predicaments, make decisions, and act

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accordingly. A priority for this discussion within the context of public administration becomes figuring out how one exists within the system; how does Sisyphus exist within the system – he and his boulder on the mountain? In the context of public administration, the public is an omnipresent boulder against public administration's shoulders. There is no emancipation from it. Public administration is toil.

Concluding Comments on the Discussion Chapter

This discussion chapter has explicated and illustrated the emergence of an existential theoretical framework for understanding and describing the experience and practice of public administration that resulted from this dissertation's grounded theory research. It has done so by revisiting this dissertation's research purpose and research questions, identifying and explaining the components of an existential theoretical framework, and addressing the framework's applications and utility for both public administration scholars and practitioners. The next chapter concludes this dissertation and discusses the limitations of this study and opportunities for future research that result from this study's findings.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The preceding chapters within this dissertation addressed the purpose for this research, the methodology for conducting this research, the results of this research's analysis, and the resulting implications, applications, and utility of this research's findings. The purpose of this chapter is to bring this dissertation to a close. This chapter does so by first addressing limitations of this study. Then, based on this study's findings and limitations, opportunities for future research are addressed. Lastly, this chapter ends with some concluding statements regarding the totality of this dissertation and its findings.

6.1 Limitations of the Study

As is the case in all research, there are limitations to this study. These limitations result from the environment in which the research participants work and from the complexities of the grounded theory research method. The limitations below address the potential for bias introduced into the research due to the type of interviewees who participated within the study and the research interests of the researcher himself. The limitations that follow also include the ways of seeing and not seeing that occur within theory and paradigms.

6.1.1 Bias and Grounded Theory Research

Due to the interpretive nature of grounded theory research, types and degrees of bias are to be expected. However, within grounded theory research, it is important to try to ensure that the bias that exists does not short circuit the generation and relevance of theory that emerges from the research's information. Within this study's research, the potential for bias results from the type of interviewees interviewed and the research interests of the researcher.

SES members were selected as a valuable source of information for the purposes of this research. Obviously, as top level administrators and managers, it is possible that this study's findings are flavored with some degree of managerialism. Managerial biases are not uncommon within public administration and organization theories. Some would consider managerial-centric theories to be the norm – especially critical theorists.

However, the theoretical framework that results from this research still represents, understands, and describes the experience and practice of public administration, even if the experience and practice represented, understood, and described is that of managers. The theoretical integrity of the emergent framework remains informative and relevant. Additionally, this limitation opens up exciting opportunities for future research that could involve different and/or varying levels and types of public workers.

As for the research interests of the researcher and the potential for bias, the researcher exercised effort in allowing the grounded theory analysis to inform the emerging theoretical structures and categories and not the research interests of the researcher. However, Glaser and Strauss (1967), by way of a footnote at the beginning of their book, tip their hat at pre-existing theory as a means of providing perspective for

identifying relevant data and abstract categories within their data. This understanding of the role of extant, pre-existing theory is shared with the more interpretivist researchers (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1994 and 1998; Locke, 2001), the constructivist researchers (Charmaz, 1991, 1995, 2003, and 2005; Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001), and the postmodernist researchers (Clarke, 2005).

A primary characteristic of the more current interpretivist grounded theorists is the honesty and awareness of one's own role and personal interactionist involvement in conducting grounded theory research. As such, these grounded theorists are comfortable, and cautious, admitting, "Rather than reflecting a *tabula rasa*, grounded theorists bring to their studies the general perspectives of their disciplines, their own philosophical, theoretical, substantive, and methodological proclivities, their particular research interests, and their biographies" (Charmaz, 1990/1994, p. 88). Being aware of one's baggage makes one more cautious of bias and influence than one who is oblivious to one's baggage. Accordingly, grounded theorists do not bring with them "a set of finely-honed preconceived concepts and categories automatically. Should grounded theorists apply such concepts and categories – even their own previous ones – to new data, they must justify them" (Charmaz, 1990/1994, p. 88).

Lastly, some argue that without some theoretical sensitivity to inform one's research, data on its own can culminate in mundane descriptions. The grounded theorist needs theoretical scrutiny, direction, and development to inform his or her data. Data alone is insufficient. One's data must address and/or confront theoretical issues (Charmaz, 2005). Regardless, one must be cautious so as to not make the mistake of forcing one's data in to preconceived theoretical categories – accidentally or not. In the

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case of this research, any possibility of an existential theoretical framework manifesting from the interview information occurred after the categories/themes "the environment," "the work," and "the individual" had already formed. Certainly, there were existential threads weaving their way through the codes and categories/themes, but they did not coalesce into a substantial theoretical whole until later in the grounded theory analysis.

6.1.2 Ways of Seeing and Not Seeing within Theory and Paradigms

This subsection addresses issues of ways of seeing and not seeing that potentially arise within the theoretical and paradigmatic work of this dissertation. Such instances could be considered to occur within this study's use of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological paradigms, the metaphorical character of "the Sisyphusian predicament," the terminology of futility and absurdity, and the notion of emancipation.

6.1.2.a Describing versus Prescribing

This dissertation used Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological paradigms to categorize authors within existentialism and grounded theory. Doing so creates opportunity for seeing and opportunities for not seeing. This study incorporated the interpretivist paradigm during its research. As such, the existential theoretical framework for understanding and describing experience and practice within public administration that emerged within this research does just that. It provides understanding and description. It does not prescribe anything. It does not tell public administrators how to do public administration. It offers an interpretive substantive theory of how one exists within the system, but it cannot move into how to do public administration. This

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theoretical framework can, nevertheless, inform the practice of public administration by enlightening scholars' and practitioners' awareness, understandings, and interpretations of issues within the experience and practice of public administration.

Existentialism is not about running things – from the interpretivist point of view. However, if one were to work within a radical humanist paradigm, one could begin to work towards creating an existential theory for doing public administration. That too could become an opportunity for future research.

6.1.2.b Sisyphus as a Metaphor

This notion of ways of seeing and not seeing also addresses a potential limitation within the metaphorical application of "the Sisyphusian predicament" onto the experience and work of public administrators. Sisyphus is being punished. Public administrators applied for and chose public work. Interestingly enough this topic even came up in one of the interviews. With regard to Sisyphus's predicament, an interviewee responded that although it is true that there is never an end to public work, that is not a punishment. It is simply an aspect of public work. That was exactly what Camus suggested was Sisyphus's resolution regarding the gods and his toil. That was how, through metaphysical revolt, he defied them. It was just work; it was just the way things were. That is one of the reasons why Sisyphus works as a symbol for dealing with one's existential situation. 'Well, yeah, it's what we do.' And, that's not defeatist in any means. Therefore, the extent to which the myth of Sisyphus matches up with the experiences of SES members is substantial enough and useful enough to be applicable within this research.

6.1.2.c Public Activity, Absurdity, and Futility

During its discussion of public activity, this research used and discussed the terms absurdity and futility. To some, the idea of telling a public administrator that his or her work is absurd is offensive. During this study's research, no public administrator was ever told that his or her work was absurd. [No public administrators were injured or killed during the research of this dissertation.] When asked during the interviews whether or not the interviewees thought the idea of government being able to solve all of society's problems was absurd, the interviewees respond affirmatively. Now, with regard to identifying aspects of public administrators' work predicaments as absurd, this identification involves an understanding of absurdity from a specific philosophical point of view rather than a day-to-day point of view.

The absurd to Camus carries with it no negative connotation or denotation. It is simply a term that Camus decided to use to label such endeavors as finite minds trying to unify and grasp the infinite. Camus considered himself an absurdist rather than an existentialist, but the term never stuck. Matter-of-fact, in the discussion chapter, it was said that, according to Camus, "Existentialism is 'a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity' (Camus, 1991, p. 54). However, this discussion would restate this idea as a constant, or as a come-and-go, confrontation between one and one's own finitude within a boundedly understandable infinite world and universe." The word "existentialism" was not within the quotation marks of Camus's quote because Camus was using the term "the absurd" when he wrote that line. However, to the rest of the existential community, he was discussing "existentialism." Similarly, Sartre (1938) describes the state of absurdity as being relative to one's or something's accompanying

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circumstances. "A madman's ravings, for example, are absurd in relation to the situation in which he finds himself, but not in relation to his madness" (Sartre, 1938, p. 185). Therefore, in keeping with this understanding and usage of the term "absurd," using this term to describe aspects of public administration is not patriarchical. The term absurd, as it is used in this dissertation does not imply "ridiculously unreasonable" of "lacking order or value" (Merriam-Webster, 1990, p. 47).

With regard to futility, a paradigmatic divide between interpretivism and radical humanism could also cause problems with some readers. During this dissertation, it has been argued that there are examples of arguable futility within the experience and practice of public administration. For example, within the work of public administration, "every solution leads to a new problem. Modern managers experience this every day as they cope with the flux confronting them" (Morgan, 1997, p. 289). Additionally, Rittel and Webber (1973) present similar ideas in their concept of social issues as wicked problems. Any activity aimed at solving a wicked problem will produce subsequent waves of consequences over an extended, and possibly unlimited, period of time. The authors point out how public administrators need to be cognizant of the waves of repercussions that reverberate through systemic networks and to value the consequences of such repercussions. "Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem" (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p. 165).

However, the results of this study's grounded theory research suggest that public administrators and scholars need not be disheartened, and are not disheartened, by the futility, ambiguity, and consequentiality of their situation. By owning the on-going process of their work, by persevering, by rebelling, by participating in

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microemancipation, public administration defies its absurdity. Existential action allows for significant action in the face of a seemingly futile struggle against ever changing social problems. In the face of potential meaninglessness and futility, never-ending toil, and finite boundedness, individuals author their senses of relevance and significance.

Some critics of Rittel and Webber and of this dissertation would call to question the use of "the futility thesis" (Hirschman, 1991, p. 7). Hirschman defines "the futility thesis" as "attempts at social transformation will be unavailing" (Hirschman, 1991, p. 7). This definition works for Hirschman, but it does not apply to the use of futility within this research. As a critical theorist, Hirschman is situated within the radical humanist paradigm. He writes, "the futility thesis" is a dynamic that "is self-fulfilling as the assertions about the meaninglessness of intended changes and reforms weaken resistance to their further emasculation and outright abandonment – in this sense, Mosca and Pareto can be said to have contributed to the rise of fascism in Italy, by pouring ridicule and discredit on the country's fledgling democratic institutions" (Hirschman, 1991, p. 78). Hirschman does not get the existential understanding and approach to futility.

Futility in this study is a description of the characteristics of various public administrative predicaments. It is not a cognitive, political, or sociological structure laid across public workers in order to keep them down. Quite the contrary, this research shows that one can create meaning and relevance while not overthrowing some superstructure or escaping some dominating system. As mentioned previously, one is always within some system. Therefore, one can choose how one is going to go about existing within such systems. Hirschman claims that "to the extent that the futility claim holds, there is no hope for any successful or effective steering or intervention, let alone

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for 'fine-tuning'" (Hirschman, 1991, p. 75). This is obviously not the case within this research, where by way of an existential theoretical framework, SES members successfully engage in episodes of microemancipation. This microemancipation "portrays the emancipatory idea not as one large, tightly integrated project, but rather as a group of projects, each limited in terms of space, time, and success" (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, p. 446). Therefore, successful and effective steering and intervention can occur within an interpretive, existential context.

6.1.2.d Interpretivists, Radical Humanists, and Emancipation

It is worthwhile to restate that this research employs an interpretive paradigm for conducting and discussing its research and findings. During the course of the grounded theory analysis of the interview information, issues and concepts of rebellion and microemancipation arose from the interviews. This study's presentation and discussion of such topics does not amount to advocating such themes. The interpretivism of this study simply interpreted and described the experiences and practices of the interviewees.

The interpretivist paradigmatic position of this research displays acceptance of attempts at liberation common to radical humanist efforts. However, it maintains that such attempts at liberating the individual are not imperative. If one chooses to take that route, that is entirely acceptable within the existential contexts of choice, responsibility, and consequence. Similarly, so is doing nothing – an "eh, so what" response is equally valid from an existential point of view. However, it is interesting to note that within the interviews there are hints at, vague references to, and explicit advocacies of rebellion.

Nevertheless, the rebellion is in keeping with the types of rebellion and microemancipation addressed within the existential theoretical framework.

Metaphysical revolt and microemancipation do not lead directly to radical humanism. These activities remain within the interpretivist camp. Interpretivist existentialists are interested in understanding the human condition of individuals wrestling with living in the social constructions of their cultural-historical contexts. For example, Kierkegaard was not interested in overthrowing the reigning religious and philosophical regimes as much as exposing their shortcomings and encouraging modifications to them. Similarly, Jaspers sought to critique the potentially dogmatic established schools of philosophy and replace them with the fluid activity of philosophizing. For example, Camus, a member of the French existentialists, does not fit the radical humanist mold. He advocates revolt, but it consists of a metaphysical revolt involving consciousness and philosophical awareness. It is not a revolt against social institutions. He is actually aware of and sympathetic to cultural and social influences and constraints on the individual.

6.2 Opportunities for Future Research

Based on this study's findings and limitations, this research provides exciting opportunities for future research. Future research opportunities based on this dissertation's findings could involve changes in the scale and scope of this research and its existential theoretical framework. In this section, the opportunities for future research based on changes in scale are presented first. They are followed by an opportunity of future research based on a change in scope.

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The public administrators who participated within this study are some of the top

level administrators in the Federal government. As such, the theoretical findings and

insight within this dissertation's theoretical framework for understanding the experience

and practice of public administration could possibly be expanded and be strengthened by

applying this research to more SES members and to administrators in other levels of

government. It would be interesting to explore the particular experiences and practices of

other levels and types of public administrators. Comparing experiences and practices

across different levels and types would be interesting as well. This research and its

existential theoretical framework could be applied to, and tested on, state level

administrators, county level administrators, municipal administrators, and street-level

bureaucrats – to identify a few.

With regard to changes in scope, this dissertation's framework emerged within an

interpretive paradigm. Therefore, in the case of this research, existentialism does not tell

administrators how to do public administration. However, if one were to work within a

radical humanist paradigm, one could begin to work toward creating an existential theory

for doing public administration.

6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to contribute a new theoretical understanding of

the experience and practice of public administration. In order to do so, this research was

interested in discovering whether or not an existential theoretical framework could

emerge that would help practitioners and scholars of public administration understand

and describe the experience and practice of public administration. Therefore, this

dissertation participated in generating new theory. Theory building involves learning new ways of see things and, in turn, constructing new realities of life and work experience. This was exactly the intent of this dissertation. To do so, this dissertation employed grounded theory – a qualitative research methodology for generating theory that emerges from the analysis of empirical data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2005).

Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing new theory from systematically gathered and analyzed information (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This dissertation used a grounded theory methodology to collect interview information from SES members, to analyze the interview information, and to trace the theoretical concepts and categories/themes that emerged from the interview information into a theoretical framework. The substantive existential theoretical framework that emerged involved three categories/themes, "the individual," "the work," and "the individual," and the core category/theme "the Sisyphusian predicament."

There are both scholarly and practicable applications and utility to this grounded theory research's existential theoretical framework. By generating new theories that "fit" and "work" in contextually appropriate environments, grounded theory is relevant and useful to both academic and nonacademic audiences (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Importantly, this study has contributed to the literature by producing introductory, exploratory work towards developing a new theoretical alternative within the literature of public administration specifically, and organization studies in general. By reflecting on

this existential theoretical framework, scholars and practitioners will have more, and potentially at times better, ways of reading and understanding public work.

Along with helping to produce a new theoretical avenue for approaching the study and practice of public administration, this grounded existential theoretical framework also contributes a number of specific applications and utilities. Existentialism's repudiation of any body of belief's adequacy facilitates a plurality of competing schools of thought wherein epistemological and methodological approaches could be selected on the basis of context and utility. This idea plays out within issues of decision making, evaluation, and research. Accordingly, such a framework could also be applied to the theory and practice of public administration as a means for encouraging discourse and multiculturalism. Lastly, it concentrates efforts away from unobtainable utopias and can focus scholars and practitioners onto contextually possible and relevant routes of activity and study.

With this research's existential theoretical framework in place, there are interesting and exciting avenues for future research. Such research could include testing the framework across levels and types of public administrators, ranging from SES members to street-level bureaucrats. Additionally, having devised an interpretivist framework for understanding how individuals exist and work within public administration, this dissertation could encourage future research that seeks to prescriptively address the practice of public administration. Doing so could possibly involve research within a radical humanist paradigm.

In conclusion, it is worthwhile to remind the reader that this research provides a rich understanding and description of the issues, concepts, and theoretical

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categories/themes that are at play within the day-to-day and overall experiences and practices of public administrators. It demonstrates that one can see existential characteristics within the experience and practice of public administration that can be understood and described through an existential theoretical framework. These characteristics can be seen and conceptualized by way of "the Sisyphusian Predicament;" its three components: "the environment," "the work," "the individual;" and the categories'/themes' focused codes. Accordingly, the existential characteristics play themselves out within the SES members' activities and experiences in the ways that "the Sisyphusian predicament" describes the issues administrators must experience and address (never-endingness, boundedness, and finitude in the face of infinitude) and the ways that administrators go about addressing such issues (the choice for metaphysical revolt/microemancipation; managing the scope and scale of one's intentions; and generating and authoring relevance, significance, and meaning).

Appendices

Appendix A

Consent to be Interviewed Form (The format has been adjusted to meet the format requirements of this dissertation. Additionally, the actual form fits on one page.)

ADULT CONSENT FORM

1) Title of Research Study: Existentialism and Public Administration.

2) Investigator: T. Lucas Hollar. *Responsible Project Investigator*: Arthur Sementelli, Ph.D.

3) Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to develop an existential theoretical framework for viewing and understanding public administration. Doing so will help to provide scholars and practitioners with a better informed understanding of public administrative action and experience.

4) Procedures:
Participation in this study will require subjects to participate in an interview that will be administered by the investigator. The interview will last between one to two hours. As long as the subjects are willing, the interviews will be audio-recorded so that they can be analyzed by three qualitative research techniques. If any of the subjects prefer not to be audio-recorded, the investigator will simply take notes during the interview.

5) Risks:
The risks involved with participation in this study are no more than one would experience in regular daily activities. Information obtained by this study will not be used for any evaluative purposes or in any way be associated with job performance. Information obtained by this study will be confidential, and it will be collected and stored without any form of subject identification other than a study number and interview date.

6) Benefits:
Potential benefits that subjects may attain from participation in this research study include the satisfaction of knowing that they have contributed to the potential development of public administration theory.

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7) Data Collection & Storage:

All of the audio-recordings and results will be kept confidential and secure. Only the people working with the study will see your data, unless required by law. No participants will be identified by name. Identification will be by study number and interview dates.

8) Contact Information:

For related problems or questions regarding your rights as a subject, the Division of Research of Florida Atlantic University can be contacted at (561) 297-0777. For other questions about the study, you should call the primary investigator, T. Lucas Hollar, at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or the responsible project investigator, Arthur Sementelli, Ph.D., at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

9) Consent Statement:

I have read or had read to me the preceding information describing this study. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and freely consent to participate. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I have received a copy of this consent form.

- I consent to participate, and I consent to having my interview audio-recorded.

Signature of Subject: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

- I consent to participate, but I do not consent to having my interview audio-recorded.

Signature of Subject: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Initial Semi-Structured Interview Protocol of the Grounded Theory Analysis

Existentialism and Public Administration
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

T. Lucas Hollar
Florida Atlantic University

I. Intro
1. What is your study ID?
2. What is today's date?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your race or ethnicity?
6. For what department or agency do/did you work?
7. In general terms that will protect your anonymity, what is your current position?
8. In general terms that will protect your anonymity, what was your previous position?
9. How many people work/worked below you in your current/last position?
10. How many years have you worked in government: local, state, and/or federal?
11. How many years have you worked in your current position/last position as an SES member?

II. Definition
1. To what extent are the issues facing your department well-defined?
2. To what extent do the issues facing your department rely on political judgment for definition?

III. Influence
1. How much influence does your department have on the *formulation of policies* that your department is charged for implementing? If it has influence, in what ways can it influence the formulation of such policies?
   a. How much influence do you have on the *formulation of policies* that your department is charged for implementing? If you have influence, in what ways can you influence the formulation of such policies?
2. How much influence does your department have on the *content of policies* that your department is charged for implementing? If it has influence, in what ways can it influence the content of such policies?
   a. How much influence do you have on the *content of policies* that your department is charged for implementing? If you have influence, in what ways can you influence the content of such policies?
3. How much influence does your department have on the *processes of implementation for policies* that your department is charged for implementing? If

it has influence, in what ways can it influence the process of implementing such policies?

   a. How much influence do you have on the *processes of implementation for policies* that your department is charged for implementing? If you have influence, in what ways can you influence the process of implementing of such policies?

4. If your department does not have influence, what sort of sovereignty, if any, does it have in the *processes of implementation for policies* that your department is charged for implementing?

   a. If you do not have influence, what sort of sovereignty, if any, do you have in the *processes of implementation for policies* that your department is charged for implementing?

IV. Politics

1. Do you agree with the identification of the issues your department is charged to handle?

   a. Do you agree with your department's understanding of the issues your department is charged to handle?
   b. Do you agree with the government's understanding of the issues your department is charged to handle?
   c. Do you agree with the level of importance given to the issues your department is charged to handle?

2. Are there disagreements within your department about the <u>identification</u> of the issues your department is charged to handle?

3. Are there disagreements within your department about the <u>understanding</u> of the issues your department is charged to handle?

4. Are there disagreements within your department about the <u>importance</u> of the issues your department is charged to handle?

5. Do you think that there are any issues that <u>you</u> should be addressing but are not?

6. Do you think that there are any issues that <u>your department</u> should be addressing but are not?

7. Are there disagreements within your department about the issues that should be addressed but are not?

8. Do you think there are issues to address that are present "out there," "in the world," but your department just don't know about them yet?

   a. If so, how do you find out about them?
   b. If not, from where do issues arrive?

9. Do people within your department and the people within outside groups with which your department interacts see things the same way?

10. Do the various departments within the federal government see things the same way?

   a. If there are any differences, what accounts for these differences?

11. Do you think that those in the federal government see things the same ways as people who do not work for the federal government see things?

   a. If there are any differences, what accounts for these differences?

12. Are there objective, universal ways of <u>understanding</u> public needs?
13. Are there objective, universal ways of <u>identifying</u> public needs?
14. Are there objective, universal ways of <u>responding</u> to public needs?
15. Based on your work experience as a Senior Executive Service member, do you think that there are objective ways of <u>identifying</u> public problems, or is problem recognition interpretive/political?
16. Based on your work experience as a Senior Executive Service member, do you think that there are objective ways of <u>formulating solutions</u> to public problems, or is solution formulation interpretive/political?
17. Based on your work experience as a Senior Executive Service member, do you think that there are objective ways of <u>evaluating policy</u> responses to public problems, or is policy evaluation interpretive/political?
18. How much politics is involved in the formulation of policies related to your department?
    a. If any politics are involved, in what ways does the politics affect the work that you do?
    b. If any politics are involved, in what ways does the politics affect your experience of public work/service?
19. How much politics are involved in implementing policies charged to your department?
    a. If any politics are involved, in what ways does the politics affect the implementation of policies charged to your department?
    b. If any politics are involved, in what ways does the politics of implementation affect your experience of working in your department?

V. Change
1. Are the <u>issues</u> towards which your department acts constantly changing?
2. Are the <u>contexts</u> of the issues constantly changing?
3. Are important <u>definitions that identify and/or describe</u> issues constantly changing?
4. Are the <u>measures</u> used to observe and/or evaluate the issues constantly changing?
5. Is the <u>importance</u> of the issues constantly changing?
6. How often do changes in <u>public needs</u> affect your department?
7. How often do changes in <u>public opinion</u> affect your department?
8. How often has your department's mission changed or been modified? Why?
9. How often do you alter your department's objectives and/or goals? Why?
10. How useful are your organizational/departmental goals?
11. How useful is your organizational/departmental goal attainment?

VI. Universals
1. Do you think that there are any universal truths or principles that guide, or should guide, public administrators in their <u>planning</u>?
    a. If so, what are they? How applicable are they across differing contexts?
    b. If not, why do you think that there aren't?

2. Do you think that there are any universal truths or principles that guide, or should guide, public administrators in their <u>decision making</u>?
    a. If so, what are they? How applicable are they across differing contexts?
    b. If not, why do you think that there aren't?
3. Do you think that there are any universal truths or principles that guide, or should guide, public administrators in their <u>actions</u>?
    a. If so, what are they? How applicable are they across differing contexts?
    b. If not, why do you think that there aren't?
4. On what is public administration based if there are not any universal truths or principles to guide public administrative activities?

VII. Wicked
1. Do you find that the work you do occurs in the wake of your, and/or others', previous activities?
2. Do you feel as though your attempts to solve one set of problems ever creates other connected problems?
3. To what extent do you agree that:
    a. There is no definitive formulation of a public problem?
    b. Public problems have no stopping rule?
    c. Solutions to public problems are not true-or-false but that they are good-or-bad?
    d. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a public problem?
    e. Due to the potential consequences to citizens, every solution to a public problem is a 'one-shot operation'; because every attempt counts significantly?
    f. Public problems have neither have an exhaustible set of potential solutions nor a well described set of permissible operations for developing solutions?
    g. Every public problem is unique?
    h. Every public problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem?
    i. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution?
    j. Public administrators have no right to be wrong because public administrators are responsible for the conditions they create?
    k. How do your responses to these ideas affect the type of work you do?
    l. How do your responses to these ideas affect the way you perceive and experience the work you do?

4. How do you justify your participation in public work when it seems that every success that the government makes is replaced by yet another web of problems to address?

VIII. Resolution

1. How does your department decide when to terminate action towards individual departmental goals or issues?
2. Is it obvious when your department solves a public problem towards which it is required to work?
3. Will there always be work for your department to do?
4. Will there always be a need for your department?
5. Can your department successfully accomplish its mission by crossing some figurative finish line of completely solved problems?
6. How do you know when your department's work is done?
7. Will it ever be done?

IX. Absurdity

1. Is it absurd to think that America's public administrative bodies can successfully solve all of society's problems?
2. How would you describe, as in, what adjective would you use to describe, the abilities of America's public administrative bodies to successfully solve all of society's problems?
3. In what ways, if any, do Sisyphus and his rock accurately portray public work/service?
4. In what ways, if any, do Sisyphus and his rock inaccurately portray public work/service?
5. What would be a good analogy or metaphor to describe the way you feel about the nature of your work and your experience of your work?

X. Motivation

1. On a personal level, what motivates you to continue to do the work that you do?
   a. Is you answer based on universal ideas that can, and/or should, be applicable to everyone, or is your answer based on personal individual ideas?
2. On an organizational level, what motivates you to continue to do the work that you do?
   a. Is you answer based on universal ideas that can, and/or should, be applicable to everyone, or is your answer based on personal individual ideas?
3. How do you justify your participation in public work when it seems that every success that the government makes is replaced by yet another web of problems to address?

4. To what extent do you reflect on your perceptions of American values, such as liberty, justice, equality, etc., in the midst of your work?
   a. To what extent do your perceptions of American values, such as liberty, justice, equality, etc., inform the decisions you make within the context of your day-to-day work at your department?

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     b. To what extent do your perceptions of American values, such as liberty, justice, equality, etc., inform the actions you perform within the context of your day-to-day work at your department?

5. How relevant is your personal contribution to the work of your department and ultimately to the work of the entire government
6. How relevant do you feel in the day-to-day functioning of the government?
7. How relevant is the work you do to the average citizen on the street?
8. How does that make you feel?
9. What was the most important decision making moment you had as it related to the benefit of America as a nation and to Americans as individuals?

Appendix C

Revised and Final Version of the Semi-Structured Interview Protocol of the Grounded Theory Analysis as a Result of Emerging Concepts and Theoretical Sampling

Existentialism and Public Administration
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

T. Lucas Hollar
Florida Atlantic University

I. Intro
1. What is your study ID?
2. What is today's date?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your race or ethnicity?
6. For what department or agency do/did you work?
7. In general terms that will protect your anonymity, what is your current position?
8. In general terms that will protect your anonymity, what was your previous position(s)?
9. How many people work/worked below you in your current/last position?
10. How many years have you worked in government: local, state, and/or federal?
11. How many years have you worked in your current position/last position as an SES member?

II. Definition
1. To what extent are the issues facing your department well-defined?

III. Politics
1. Do you think there are issues to address that are present "out there," "in the world," but your department just don't know about them yet?
   a. If so, how do you find out about them?
   b. If not, from where do issues arrive?
2. Do you think that those in the federal government see things the same ways as people who do not work for the federal government see things?
   a. If there are any differences, what accounts for these differences?
3. Are there objective, universal ways of identifying/understanding/responding public needs?
4. Based on your work experience as a Senior Executive Service member, do you think that there are objective ways of identifying public problems/formulating solutions to public problems, or is problem recognition/formulating solutions to public problems interpretive/political?

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IV. Change
1. Are the issues towards which your department acts constantly changing?
2. Are the contexts of the issues constantly changing?
3. Are important definitions that identify and/or describe issues constantly changing?
4. How often do changes in public needs/public opinion affect your department?
5. How often has your department's mission changed or been modified? Why?
6. How often do you alter your department's objectives and/or goals? Why?

V. Universals
1. Do you think that there are any universal truths or principles that guide, or should guide, public administrators in their planning/decision making?
   a. If so, what are they? How applicable are they across differing contexts?
   b. If not, why do you think that there aren't?

VI. Wicked
1. Do you find that the work you do occurs in the wake of your, and/or others', previous activities?
2. Do you feel as though your attempts to solve one set of problems ever creates other connected problems?
3. To what extent do you agree that:
   a. There is no definitive formulation of a public problem?
   b. Public problems have no stopping rule?
   c. Solutions to public problems are not true-or-false but that they are good-or-bad?
   d. Public problems have an exhaustible set of potential solutions?
   e. Public problems have a well described set of permissible operations for developing solutions?
4. How do your responses to these ideas affect the way you perceive and experience the work you do?
5. How do you explain your participation in public work when it seems that every success that the government makes is politically arguable and is replaced by yet another web of problems to address?

VII. Resolution
1. How does your department decide when to terminate action towards individual departmental goals or issues?
2. Is it obvious when your department solves a public problem towards which it is required to work?
3. Will there always be work for your department to do?
4. Can your department successfully accomplish its mission by crossing some figurative finish line of completely solved problems?

VIII. Absurdity

1. Is it absurd to think that America's public administrative bodies can successfully solve all of society's problems?
2. How would you describe, as in, what adjective would you use to describe, the abilities of America's public administrative bodies to successfully solve all of society's problems?
3. In what ways, if any, do Sisyphus and his rock accurately portray public work/service?
4. In what ways, if any, do Sisyphus and his rock inaccurately portray public work/service?
5. What would be a good analogy or metaphor to describe the way you feel about the nature of your work and your experience of your work?

IX. Motivation

1. On a personal level, what motivates you to continue to do the work that you do?
   a. Is you answer based on universal ideas that can, and/or should, be applicable to everyone, or is your answer based on personal individual ideas?
2. To what extent do your perceptions of American values, such as liberty, justice, equality, etc., inform the decisions you make within the context of your day-to-day work at your department?
3. How relevant is your personal contribution to the work of your department and ultimately to the work of the entire government?
4. How relevant do you feel in the day-to-day functioning of the government?
5. How relevant is the work you do to the average citizen on the street?
   a. How does that make you feel?
6. What was the most important decision making moment you had as it related to the benefit of America as a nation and to Americans as individuals?

Appendix D

*A Description of the Research Process Regarding the Initiation of Interest, the IRB
Approval, the Interviews and Interview Contexts, and the Grounded Theoretical Analysis*

This dissertation's research began, in various forms, during Spring 2006. Initial

ideas for this research stemmed from, and were refined during, classes; conferences; and

discussions with peers, professionals, and professors. This dissertation received Florida

Atlantic University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for information

collection involving human subjects during Spring 2007.

With IRB approval to interview human subjects, this dissertation benefited from

the assistance of people in the private sector, in academia, and in government to access

potential interviewees. With this help, and after several emails and phone calls with

numerous potential interviewees, a group of Senior Executive Service (SES) members

agreed to participate. Each SES member who agreed to participate was provided with an

advance copy of the semi-structured interview questions (even though most of the

interviewees only skimmed the questions at best), an explanation of the safeguards in

place for protecting the interviewees' identities and interview information, and a consent

to be interviewed form. The consent form also discussed the risks involved in

participating in this research; the safeguards in place to protect the interviewees'

identities and interview information; contact information for communicating with the

researcher, the Dissertation Chairperson, and FAU's Division of Research; and the

interviewees' right to exit the research at any time.

A first round of interviews occurred in July 2007 in Washington, DC. These

interviews took place in the SES members' offices. Each interview lasted between an

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hour and forty-five minutes to two hours and fifteen minutes. The SES members

interviewed involved a USDA HR administrator, a former administrator for the MSPB,

and a program administrator from the USDA.

Based on analyses of, and reflections on, the interview information, the semi-

structured interview protocol was revised both during the first round of interviews and,

most importantly, after the first round of interviews as a result of concepts and theoretical

leads that emerged during the interview process and analysis. This is an important aspect

of grounded theory research wherein one's information and analysis drives subsequent

information collection.

Based on the information coming from the first round of interviews, this

dissertation sought to obtain a different variety of interviewees. The next SES members

who agreed to participate involved a program administrator from the USDA, a program

administrator from DOL, and a security administrator from DOT-FAA. The second

round of interviews occurred during December 2007. These interviews took place in the

SES members' offices. And, each interview lasted between an hour to two hours. There

were also subsequent email correspondences from some of the interviewees to the

researcher after the rounds of interviews with additional ideas regarding the interview

conversations.

During this research, a court reporter was hired to transcribe the recorded

interviews. The interview transcripts were uploaded into NVivo 8 for organization and

analysis. The NVivo software aided the coding, memo writing, and theoretical

framework building that occurred during this dissertation's research and analysis.

Chapter Three of this dissertation discussed the actual grounded theory analysis employed by this dissertation. This research began with an area of interest from which the eventual theoretical framework and its components emerged from the SES members' interview information. This took place through phases of research in which coding (see Appendix E), interviewing, and raising codes to concepts through memo writing occurred (see Appendix F), at times, simultaneously. The constant comparison technique of comparing codes to codes, codes to categories, categories to categories, and interviews to interviews caused this researcher to go back through previously coded interviews in order to modify and develop the coding schemes and emergent categories in the midst of conceptual and theoretical discoveries. NVivo helped with constant comparison by allowing the researcher to map the codes and categories (see Appendix G) and to compare pieces of interview texts coded in various ways.

As a result of delimiting categories and saturating categories, this dissertation's grounded theoretical analysis eventually arrived at a point where it could identify and describe its emergent theoretical framework. At one point there were over 110 open codes within the analysis of the interviews. However, some number of open codes were deleted due to theoretical irrelevance as the interviews were analyzed and conducted. The theoretical framework presented in this dissertation consists of a core category/theme, three categories/themes, fifteen focused codes, and 101 open codes.

Appendix E

*An Example of a Piece of Text Coded at Different Levels for Different Codes
(The codes within the box are as follows: \Category/Theme\Focused Code\Open Code.)*

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Appendix F

Examples of Memos

A Piece of Text from a Memo Regarding Early Delimiting

> Since the following only had a few references within one or two cases, and because it made substantive sense to do so, I deleted or merged the following:
> I deleted "avoidance behaviors."
> I merged "conflicting feelings" with "frustration" for "frustration and conflicting feelings"
> I deleted "identity by position"
> "Litigation" got merged into "litigation and change" – however, maybe I should name the code just "litigation" again
> "Maintenance Activities" was merged into "Issue Attention."
> "Multiplicity and the Whole" was merged into "interconnectedness"
> "Sisyphus and Anxiety" was deleted because the same pieces of text worked within "Sisyphus not Accurate"

A Piece of Text from a Memo Regarding Category Discovery and Delimiting

> As I was mapping out the various categories and their relationships/interconnectedness, some neat things happened. Perhaps, most importantly, the code "evolution and change," a child node of "no end," showed connections with three of its "sibling" codes and with three codes from the "contextuality" category. Therefore, it might not shoot up to the level of coding as "no end" but it might indeed be more than a simple open code. When looking at other open codes, it might turn out to be a mid to upper level code. "Macro and Micro" could tie into it.
>
> Other open codes of interest in the mapping are "working in the wake of others," shared by three categories: "boundedness," Bureaucratic sovereignty," and "interconnectedness," and "I don't feel helpless," shared by "Sisyphusian predicament," "Individual sovereignty and relevance," and "will and motivation."
>
> Also, the category "perseverance," which I have always thought to be conflictual with the "will and motivation" category, seems to be getting torn apart within the mapping process. Two of its five open codes are shared with "will and motivation," and three of its five open codes are shared with "Sisyphusian predicament." However, it might not be a big deal to share open codes with "Sisyphusian predicament" because "Sisyphusian predicament" is appearing to be a higher and higher category.

As I went back through all of the open codes, I realized that there might be a category emerging regarding issues of the public/perceptions of the public/the influence of the public on Bcats/etc. Looking at the map, I wonder if what comes from the "public" category will connect the "politics" category to the other categories. It will probably connect with "bureaucratic sovereignty" as well.

Additionally, as I went back through the open codes, and rereading Charmaz (1983), I wondered if there might be a "self awareness" category similar to Charmaz's "identifying moments" category. This might tie Proximity to the mission into the rest of the map – unless that category final gets bumped out – actually, it might get subsumed by the "self awareness" category.

What about the role of "uncertainty?" Is that going to form a category of some sort or is it going to help refine the category currently named "universals?" The name "universals" certainly needs to be changed.

Looking at the map #1, rereading Glaser and Strauss (1967), and thinking about the attributes and qualities of the various categories, I think that I might start finding some "affect/effect" types of connections between the categories. For example, the development of the "public" category in conjunction with the "politics" category and the "boundedness" category might affect the "bureaucratic sovereignty" category.

- Look into the open code "external determinant" relating to the various "issue" open codes. They seem to be sharing a good bit of text. Also, where the heck do the issue codes go?
- "External" on "macro/micro."
- Look at "nature or predicament of bureaucrat" and "working in the wake of others." Also, consider all of the other things it ties into. It might be its own midrange category.
- "Issues and Bureaucrats" contains "issue objectivity" and "issue definition," etc.; so, it will probably tie into the soon to be renamed "universals" category.

For Pieces of Text from Later, Higher-Level Memos, See Chapters Four and Five.
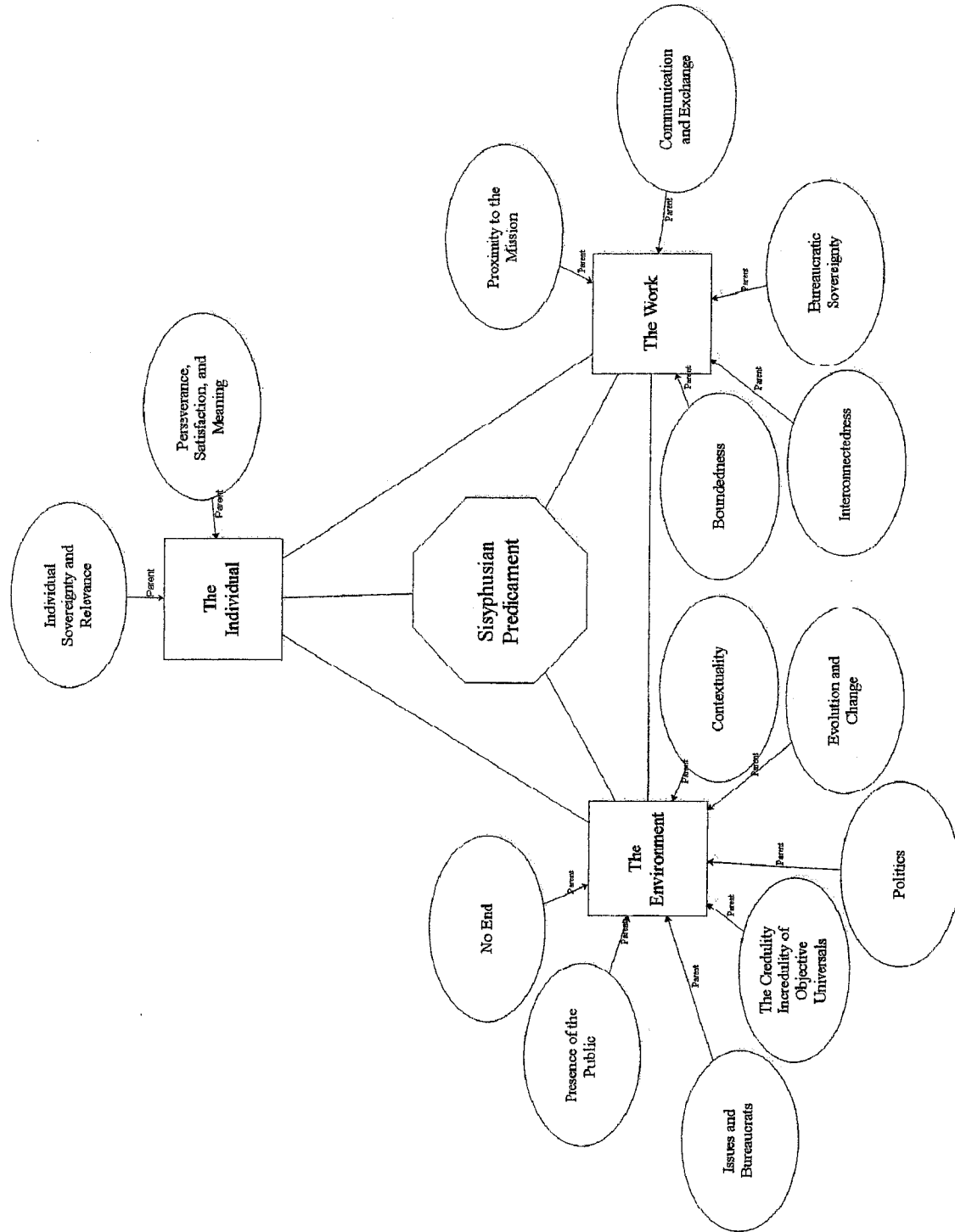
Appendix G

Mapping Categories and Their Corresponding Focused Codes (The labels of the maps presented are not legible. However, the maps allow one to see how some categories/themes share focused codes and how some focused codes share open codes)

Map #1: An early map that shows focused codes, open codes, and how some focused codes share open codes.

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Map #2: A later map that shows focused codes, open codes, and how some focused codes share open codes.
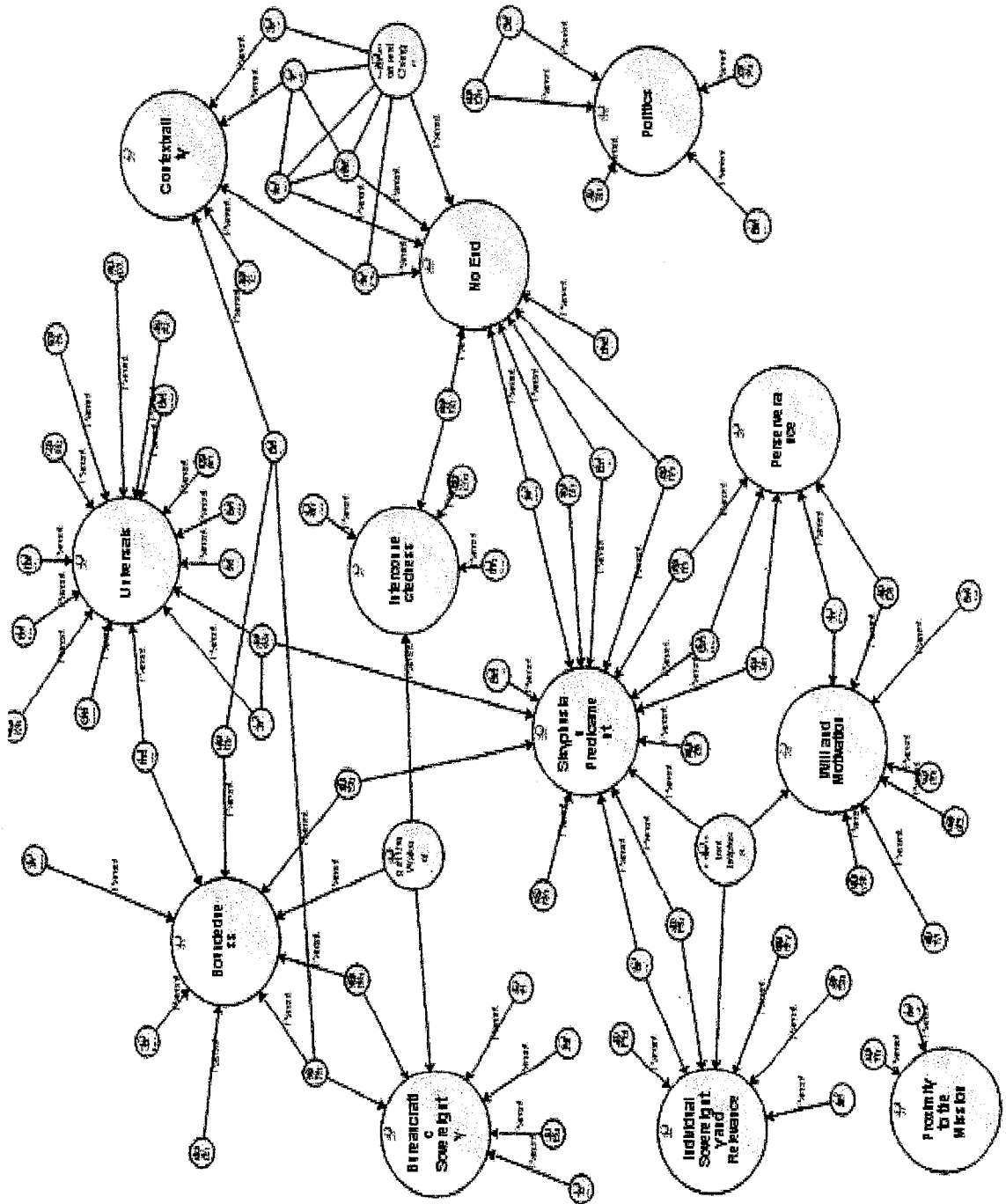
Map #3: An almost final map that shows the core category/theme, the categories/themes, and the categories/themes' focused codes. Note that the focused code "responsibility" is missing from "the individual." This is an example of the recursive nature of grounded theory analysis constantly taking place throughout the duration of the study. "Responsibility" emerged towards the end.

Appendix H

A Description of the Senior Executive Service Members who Participated in this Research.

Due to issues of confidentiality and anonymity, and due to the small numbers of

Senior Executive Service (SES) Members within the upper ranks of the Government, this

dissertation cannot identify the specific agencies and/or offices for which the

interviewees work. As mentioned in Chapter Three, one interviewee worked in human

resources within USDA and now works within DHS. One interviewee recently retired

from the MSPB. That interviewee currently works for a nonprofit organization that seeks

to attract highly motivated and qualified workers to work for the Federal government.

Two interviewees worked for USDA as high level administrators in charge of multiple

programs. One interviewee worked for DOL as a high level administrator in charge of

multiple Federal employee programs within DOL. And, one interviewee worked for

DOT – FAA as high level administrator in charge of multiple security programs.

Including the interviewees' current and pervious positions, the interviewees' had and

discussed experiences within the Department of Defense (DOD), DHS, DOL, DOT-FAA,

MSPB, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and USDA.

However, some can be said regarding other aspects of the SES members who

participated. Of those interviewed, one SES member was Asian; the other five were

white. Two were female, and four were male. The median age was 59, the average age

was 57.8. The median years of service in the public sector was 31.5. The average was 29

years. Two interviewees did not provide information regarding their years of service as

SES members. Without those two interviewees, both the median and the average years as

an SES member was 10.5.

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