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Public Service Motivation: African American Senior Military Officers Transitioning to Civilian Service

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
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Walden University
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Abstract

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Civilian Service

by

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MPA, Webster University, 2008

BS, Campbell University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

PPPA- Specialization in Public Leadership

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Abstract

Motivation plays a crucial role in public organizations in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic

motivation as well as moral obligation. While considerable efforts over the past several

decades have led to vast improvements in federal workforce diversification, significant

problems still exist involving diversity management and racial representation across all

levels of federal government employment. The theoretical framework guiding this study

was public service motivation. The purpose of this study was to explore the U.S. federal

government's inability to attract and retain senior executive service African Americans

through lived experiences of retired African American military officers who currently

work for the federal government as civilian employees but not as contractors. Via

snowball sampling, 16 participants meeting these criteria were interviewed via a list of

semi-structured questions. The study's findings indicated that retired African American

senior military officers are motivated by authority, care, fairness, loyalty, and sanctity

during their second careers in public service. Intrinsic motivators, extrinsic drive, and

moral duty were also identified as important motivating factors affecting this

population's approach to public service. Implications of this study include adding

information regarding links between military service and public service motivation. The

findings of the study may inform positive social change through new policies, practices,

and discussions on how to best prepare, recruit, and retain African American senior

military officers in public service.

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Dedication

In loving memory of Diarette Burgess my beloved mother, whose radiant presence in my life was tragically cut short when I was just an infant. Though I may not recall the tender touch of your embrace or the sound of your voice, your spirit has guided me through every step of my journey. Though fate's cruel hand denied us the opportunity to share cherished memories and experiences, your legacy endures within the depths of my soul. Your unconditional love and selflessness have become the foundation of my character, shaping me into the person I am today. I dedicate this dissertation to you, my guardian angel, as a testament to the resilience you instilled in me. Your absence left an irreplaceable void in my heart, yet your memory remains an ever-burning beacon of strength and inspiration. Through the long hours of research, the challenges faced, and the triumphs celebrated, your memory provided solace and motivation. Each milestone reached bears witness to the profound impact you continue to have on my life. As I walk across this academic threshold, I know you are walking beside me, showering me with maternal pride. Your presence may be intangible, but it is no less real, as you have become an inseparable part of my being. With every word written and every discovery made, I honor your memory and the love that knows no bounds. This work is dedicated to you, dear mother, with eternal gratitude and an unending love that transcends time and space. May it be a reflection of the profound influence you have had on me, and a tribute to the beautiful soul that continues to guide me through life's intricate tapestry. I love you Mommy.

Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed committee members, Dr. Lori Demeter and Dr. Ross Alexander, for their invaluable guidance, expertise, and constructive feedback, which have been pivotal in shaping the outcome of this dissertation. I would also like to thank my incredible network of academics, including Dr. Tangi C. James-Boone, Dr. Jason Calhoun, Dr. Troy E. Graham, Dr. George Koonce Jr., Dr. Cara Marie Manlandro, Dr. Al Moseley, and Dr. Ty Stone, for their unwavering encouragement and mentorship at various stages of this research. Their wisdom and support have been instrumental in my academic growth and success. Furthermore, I want to acknowledge the unwavering support and understanding of my friends and family who stood by me throughout this challenging journey. Their love and belief in my abilities have been a constant source of inspiration, motivating me to overcome obstacles and strive for excellence. Lastly, my sincere appreciation goes to all the study participants whose valuable contributions made this research possible. Their willingness and cooperation have not only enriched the depth and significance of this study but have also reinforced the importance of academic inquiry and collaboration.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Public service motivation (PSM) is a measure of employment attitudes that is used to explain why individuals have a desire to serve the public and merge their interests with the public interest. According to Wang et al. (2020), PSM is a popular concept within public administration that was created to challenge the "rational-choice perspectives on bureaucratic behavior" (p. 2). PSM is a multidimensional concept with four motives: compassion, attraction to public service, commitment to public values, and self-sacrifice (Perry & Wise, 1990). PSM highlights the critical role of self-determined motivation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, moral obligation, and behavior in public organizations. Wang et al. (2020) said there were five innate moralities of PSM: care, fairness, authority, loyalty, and sanctity. Connor et al. (2019) mentioned that loyalty between soldiers is idealized, resulting in emotions that promote cohesion and concomitant effectiveness in combat. Their analysis showed three core themes: loyalty is reciprocated, an emotional connection is essential for cohesion between soldiers, and loyalty is a prioritizing process. In addition, close interpersonal loyalties tended to be positively correlated.

Finding lifetime employment with a single employer is often tricky, as individuals tend to pursue multiple jobs in different organizations and disciplines (Uy, 2020). Within the workforce, employees who gain professional or developmental skills in their first career will often seek a second career that offers more inspirational gains (Giullian et al., 2011). Individuals changing careers take advantage of experiences gained from their previous professions. Organizations dedicated to their employees support them and

reduce the hardships of transitioning to a second career (Giullian et al., 2011). Little is known about the impact of support mechanisms during this second profession. Studies investigating the success of second careers among individuals transitioning from a stable to a more disruptive modern work system are rare. Determining the improvement process concerning these changes can be used to test the validity and relevance of current theories involving new forms of the profession.

The demographic makeup of senior military leaders does not reflect the diversity of the rest of the military (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). Despite efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, statistics for racial and ethnic minorities have remained constant without changing since 2008, with approximately 9.0% and 75.8% of military officers being African American and Caucasian, respectively (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). Specifically, African American women are not generally given equal opportunities for promotion. White soldiers in the armed forces recognize that minority women are less likely than themselves to be encouraged to apply or be appointed to leadership positions (Robinson et al., 2018).

Starks (2009) suggested that the U.S. federal government workforce should set an example regarding diversity, equal opportunity, and inclusion for the nation. However, minority workers are less likely than their majority counterparts to reach the most senior ranks in federal organizations (Foster et al., 2020; Starks, 2009). This trend is constant even as public organizations are making efforts to hire minorities and provide diversity management training to public administrators (Broadnax, 2018; Sabharwal et al., 2014). Perry and Wise introduced the concept of PSM, the concept that individuals desire to

serve the public and align their personal actions and interests with the overall public interest. Knowledge about critical topics such as PSM, diversity, equal opportunity, and inclusion in public organizations can contribute to more harmonious workplaces and improve organizational efficiency.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations use various strategic management tools to achieve organization objectives, including prescribed measures of success. An effective organizational success measure should be used to examine quantifiable results. Corporate diversification is a success measure that, when properly implemented, has the potential to assist in achieving positive performance outcomes (Giullian et al., 2011).

Chapter 1 is organized as follows. First, I discuss the background of the problem, followed by the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. Next, PSM is discussed as the chosen theoretical framework for the study. The chapter includes a discussion of the nature of the study, as well as assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

Background of the Problem

While showing some signs of success in promoting diversity among federal employees, federal government diversity management and minority recruitment programs still need vast improvements (Mitchell, 2011; van Knippenberg et al., 2020). At the senior executive service (SES) level of the federal government, the lack of diversity is most noticeable. The SES is the civilian component of the federal government

corresponding to senior military ranks. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM, 2020) indicated the total number of employed African Americans was 351,313 out of 1.8 million personnel. The SES consists of 7,794 personnel, with African Americans representing 11% (859) of those employed in the SES (OPM, 2020). The lack of representation of African Americans at senior levels is also apparent in the federal government's general schedule (GS) pay system. This hierarchical payment structure accounts for rank and years of experience. The federal government employs workers using the GS pay system, with 223,000 positions rated at the senior GS-14 and GS-15 pay grade levels (U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission [EEOC], 2018).

African Americans have 13.1% (or 29,000) of these top-level positions (EEOC, 2018). Currently, the U.S. military has over 1.4 million members serving on both active and reserve status in five different branches: the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, and Navy (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). Each year, approximately 185,000 members leave the military service, with some seeking to secure employment in the civilian workforce. Firsthand experimental knowledge acquired by military members throughout their careers produces a contingent of subject matter experts (SMEs) who are equipped for advancement once they enter the workforce (Wilson, 2019). According to Wilson (2019), SMEs effectively complete both individual and collective tasks and transfer their knowledge to others in work units. This includes African American senior-level military officers who are qualified to fill future GS-14, a high rank on the GS pay scale, and higher federal government vacancies. A broad understanding of these

individuals' second career choice considerations can assist in streamlining recruitment efforts and improving organizational competencies due to proper candidate selection.

Loyalty is valuable throughout the military and public sectors (Connor et al., 2019). Braender and Andersen (2013) looked at how warfare affected U.S. military personnel's perceptions of other soldiers and officers. They found that soldiers' PSM and commitment to shared military values increased after being deployed to Afghanistan. Furthermore, following deployment into combat, compassion is reduced, and commitment to public interest grows, resulting in increased PSM. Partaking in battle has profound psychological effects on individual perspectives of people and society; seeing misery does not make it easier to sympathize with those who suffer (Braender & Andersen, 2013).

Problem Statement

The research problem was the U.S. federal government's inability to attract minorities, specifically African Americans, to serve in federal public sector senior leadership and SES positions. Vanderschuere and Birdsall (2019) suggested that the federal government has increased its efforts since 2000 to increase diversity in the federal workforce, which has led to an increase in the diversity of the federal workforce. However, the diversity of the federal workforce does not parallel the general population's diversity. Therefore, significant problems still exist regarding diversity management and racial representation. Diversity management positively correlates with job satisfaction and employee work performance (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2019). That is, federal employees report high job satisfaction in diverse work environments. Stalcup (2007)

asserted "racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in the federal government's senior ranks can be a key organizational component for executing agency missions, ensuring accountability to the American people in the administration and operation of federal programs, and achieving results" (p. 1). As such, it is vitally important to understand why the government does not appear to be able to attract minorities and especially African Americans, to serve in the federal public sector in senior leadership positions as civilian employees after retirement from the military.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the federal government's inability to attract and retain African Americans in SES positions by addressing lived experiences of retired African American military officers who currently work for the federal government as civilian employees but not as contractors.

Research Questions

To address the study, the following research questions were devised:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of retired African American senior military officers about public service in the federal government as civilian employees after retirement from the military?

RQ2: What motivating factors contribute to retired African American senior military officers' public service career choices after military retirement?

Theoretical Framework

The PSM concept designed by Perry and Wise was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Perry and Wise (1990) said, "The greater an individual's PSM,

the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization" (p. 370).

PSM is a pluralistic concept used to understand human motivation and explain individual

behavior in public organizations (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Wang et al., 2020). PSM is

a type of altruistic motivation that involves serving the public and is not exclusively

applicable to public institutions (Perry & Buckwalter, 2010; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999).

The framework of PSM is a combination of motives that drive individuals to take social

responsibility to benefit society. Specifically, PSM contains five constructs: authority,

care, fairness, loyalty, and sanctity (Perry & Wise, 2010). Individuals with high levels of

PSM respect their own authority and the authority of their superiors, serving their

organizations with loyalty. Moreover, individuals with high PSM are committed to

fairness, serving public interests with care and sanctity. Widespread understanding of this

concept throughout the federal government and the government's ability to accurately

identify individuals with high intrinsic PSM levels facilitates employee selection. This

study expands knowledge on PSM constructs by providing understanding to support

maximum use of the PSM concept within the federal government. Thus, this framework

can be used to analyze social and organizational behaviors.

Nature of the Study

In this section, the research method and design for the study are detailed. The

approach, the population, and the sample are also discussed to understand why the U.S.

government does not appear to be able to attract minorities, specifically African

Americans, to serve in the federal public sector in senior leadership positions as civilian

employees after retirement from the military.

Method

A qualitative interview-based methodology was used in this study. Ward et al. (2018) noted that qualitative descriptive research ensures that the researcher understands the phenomenon being studied; I sought to provide a clear and concise explanation of characteristics and factors affecting the phenomenon under study. The qualitative methodology does not focus on measurable variables to statistically evaluate whether a phenomenon exists (Commodore et al., 2018). According to Ward et al. (2018), the qualitative research approach is appropriate for understanding the perceptions and lived experiences of participants. Moreover, this research method is used to understand participants' feelings and behaviors (Banks & Dohy, 2019). I aimed to understand lived experiences and perceptions of retired African American senior military officers about public service in the federal government as civilian employees after retirement from the military, as well as the motivating factors that drove them to pursue public service. As such, the qualitative research method was appropriate for the present study.

Research Design

I used a phenomenological research design. With phenomenology, researchers use qualitative data to explain how people encounter phenomena and their reactions to them (Sundler et al., 2019). This approach acknowledges that there is no objective reality; rather, every person has a unique perspective on the world and phenomenon under investigation (Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018).

Individuals employ unique thought processes to interpret their experiences (Miller et al., 2018). To elucidate the phenomenon of the event under inquiry, researchers

interpret participants' experiences, perceptions, and beliefs (Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018). Researchers' preconceived notions about experiences or phenomena must be bracketed (Sundler et al., 2019). The phenomenological research design is used to examine the perspectives of persons who have encountered a phenomenon to the phenomenon's boundaries. This method is frequently used to investigate lived experiences, learn more about people's thoughts, and broaden researchers' understanding of a phenomenon (Fuster Guillen, 2019). In this context, I sought to comprehend the experiences and perceptions of retired African American senior military officers about public service in the federal government as civilian employees after retirement from the military and their motivation to continue in public service.

Population

The general population under examination in the study was African American military retirees at the O-5 lieutenant colonel (LTC) level and higher who have transitioned into the federal public sector as civilian workers after retirement from the military. While statistics regarding military retirees at the O-5 level and higher are limited, of the approximately 1,400,000 active-duty servicemen, approximately 12% or 168,000 of these military servicemen are active-duty officers (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). Of these officers, there are approximately 17,546 officers at the O-5 level and above (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). Since approximately 9% of active-duty officers are African American, this means that approximately 1600 African American military members serve at the O-5 level and above (Office of Personnel

Management [OPM], 2020). These statistics are for active-duty officers, not veteran retirees.

Participant Sample

The sample consisted of 16 participants in the target population, African Americans who retired from the military at the O-5 level or higher. Participants transitioned into working in the federal government as civilian employees after their retirement from the military. A sample size of at least 15 participants was chosen because this is generally the sample size required to reach data saturation in phenomenological qualitative studies (Guest et al., 2020). However, if data saturation had not been reached after 15 participants, data collection would have continued until saturation was achieved.

A mixture of purposeful and snowball sampling was used to obtain the sample. Members of the target population were selected using a purposeful sampling strategy because they are the most informed regarding the topic of this study. Purposeful sampling is a strategy commonly used in qualitative research for identification and selection of a knowledge-rich sample when conducting a study with limited resources (Staller, 2021). There are several types of purposeful sampling strategies employed by researchers, which uses a set of pre-defined inclusion criteria to select knowledgeable participants, which is useful for selecting focus group and interview members, and snowball sampling, which is used to identify participants by asking for referrals (Creswell, 2021). I used the collected data to adjust and revise the sample selected for this study where required.

Definitions

The following terms were used throughout this study and are explained here for clarity:

O-5: Military rank equivalent to a commander (Navy and Coast Guard) or LTC (Gryder, 2008).

Military retiree: Service members who are released from the military after completing 20 or more years of service. Members can also be medically retired because of injuries during their active-duty service. Completing 20 or more years in a reserve component qualifies members for retirement (Army Publishing Directorate, 2022).

Public Service Motivation (PSM): Self-determined motivations involving moral duty, intrinsic drive, and attachment to understand work behavior and job performance in public organizations (Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). PSM is characteristic of government and non-governmental organization (NGO) work that explains why people want to serve the public (Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022; Perry & Wise, 1990).

Senior Executive Service (SES): Civil service employment classification in the U.S. federal government (Doherty et al., 2019). Positions in the SES are considered positions equivalent with private organization executives and based on various branches of the federal government such as the National Archives or DoD(Doherty et al., 2019).

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs): Professionals with advanced knowledge involving a specific area of expertise (Wilson, 2019).

Assumptions

Levitt (2021) suggested that assumptions are those situations or occurrences that are thought to be true, but there is no empirical evidence to suggest that they are true. I assumed there was a relationship between ethnicity and individual levels of PSM. I assumed the results of this study regarding perceptions and motivations obtained from the target population cannot be generalized to explain the perceptions and motivations of other ethnic groups. Additionally, I assumed all participants in this study responded to interview questions openly and honestly about their perceptions and motivation to seek employment in public organizations. Another assumption was that participants fully understood the interview questions.

Scope and Delimitations

I addressed perceptions and motivations of retired senior-level African American military officers who have retired at the rank of O-5 or higher and currently work for the federal government. This specific focus was chosen because this target population has demonstrated high levels of PSM by their commitment to serving U.S. citizens through more than 20 years of military service.

Delimitations are characteristics that restrict the scope and describe boundaries within the study; this includes sample size, location, and population traits. This study included only participants in the Washington, DC metropolitan area who were retired senior-level African American military officers who retired at the rank of O-5 and higher and currently work for the federal government as civilian employees, not contractors.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses in a study that can conceivably lead to validity concerns. A limitation of this study was that initial contact was not made with participants until they secured employment with a federal government agency. This limited the potential participant pool to individuals who had already joined public organizations after military retirement. In 2011, the Secretary of Defense mandated by executive order that all military members leaving service receive transition counseling as far out as 24 months before separation. To better fine-tune the collected data in this study, it would have been ideal to engage participants during transition planning to examine their perceptions about seeking employment with a public organization rather than after they joined a public organization. Such individuals would be able to speak directly to their motivations prior to joining public service. However, identifying the target population during the early stages of transition was difficult due to public disclosure policies, which limit knowledge of the officers retiring from the military. These public disclosure policies are imposed by the U.S. military. Therefore, it was impossible to identify participants in the transition period, a study limitation.

Another potential limitation of the study was that participants may not have been truthful about their responses. All efforts were made to make participants comfortable and secure during interviews, including reaffirming the confidential nature of answers and aggregate reporting. In general, phenomenological research designs have drawbacks concerning bias. One must introduce and integrate biases, beliefs, and values up front, and this type of study can be labor-intensive and laborious, limiting the researcher's

ability to complete the study (Miller et al., 2018). Researcher bias can limit studies if researchers do not practice sufficient reflexivity to ensure the participants' perceptions are being reported.

Significance

A looming concern in the federal government is the potential exodus of a large federal workforce due to retirements in the next few decades (Kochanowski, 2011). This situation presents an excellent opportunity for federal human resource professionals to enhance recruitment efforts and fine-tune programs to attract a more racially diverse workforce (Eoyang, 2008). Outside of the potential reduction of an already insufficiently diverse workforce, there are other possible ramifications due to mass retirements, including considerable losses of experience and critical specialty skill sets, particularly among those in critical senior leadership positions. Implications of this are of significant importance to public sector leaders who oversee workforce concerns, primarily because substantial losses of experienced workforces have immediate adverse consequences on organizational effectiveness measures such as constituent satisfaction ratings and timely service delivery (Mancias, 2008).

Combined with lack of diversity at senior levels within the federal government, these concerns represent a gap in literature involving African Americans' public service experiences. Moreover, researching this topic will lead to positive social change due to improved federal agency efficiency and staffing efforts. PSM is important as it leads to increased organizational production. PSM has a positive impact on employees' job behavior and organizational performance overall. Thus, public sectors need to create

ways to maximize and encourage PSM. Information gleaned from this study may be helpful in terms of helping to create more effective policies and programs in the future.

Summary

U.S. federal government promotion trends show that minorities fail to reach senior-level leadership positions within governmental agencies. There have been many diversity strides within the field of organizational leadership, highlighting the necessity for minorities to obtain senior executive positions. This growing trend needs immediate attention because proper diversity and inclusion are critical managerial concerns contributing to agency effectiveness and efficiency. A viable pool of candidates to fill senior-level government vacancies is retiring senior-level African American military officers who have retired at O-5 and higher. This population has considerable technical and leadership experience that can be beneficial when used in the federal workplace. However, little is known about PSM levels of these individuals, which was a gap in literature this study was able to address. Chapter 2 includes a comprehensive review of literature involving the topic of PSM and additional relevant issues and alternative viewpoints.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 includes an examination of literature regarding processes and motivations of African American individuals who attained O-5 rank or higher in the armed services and their transition, or lack thereof, into government service. The problem was the federal government's inability to attract minorities, specifically African Americans, to serve in the federal public sector senior leadership positions, in particular SES roles. The chapter includes background information about this problem and current literature regarding individuals who retire at the O-5 level to transition into the SES. First, I detail the literature search strategy so that future researchers have a template to reproduce this study. Second, I review the theoretical framework. I then offer an overview of the military structure and motivations for joining the military. Despite laws to ensure nondiscrimination regarding race, as mandated by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, there appears to be a low number of African Americans represented in the SES (Anestaki et al., 2016). Specifically, the SES contains approximately 11% African Americans, according to OPM (2020). Thus, it is imperative to examine possible causes for low representation.

The theoretical framework was PSM. Additionally, I also explored organizational trust, transactional and transformational leadership theories, and the social exchange theory. To accurately assess and review the problem, I examined U.S. military structure, demographics, motivations for joining, leadership styles, and transitioning out of the military. Then, I review the SES and its demographics, criteria to apply, different variables related to SES employment, and motivations to apply. Finally, the U.S. military

and SES systems are compared, contrasted, and analyzed to examine the lack of veteran African American SES members.

Literature Search Strategy

I undertook several strategies to ensure a successful review of relevant literature. I reviewed studies about retired African American military servicemen. Next, I explored national statistics websites to collect information on the population from the U.S. OPM and DoD. I conducted a keyword search using the Walden University Library to locate relevant articles, peer-reviewed publications, books, and scholarly writing. The keywords were: *African American military officers*, *United States military*, *Senior Executive Service*, *military rank structure*, *military career*, *motivation*, *government service*, *motivational factors*, *military career change*, *GS pay scale*, and *public service motivation*. I used the Walden University Library to gather comprehensive information from Google Scholar, SpringerLink, and EBSCOHost.

Theoretical Framework

PSM was the theoretical framework for the study. This framework is first defined and discussed. Then, organizational trust and theories associated with leadership and PSM are addressed.

Public Service Motivation

According to Taylor et al. (2015), PSM is "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (p. 145). PSM can also be described as "beliefs, values, and attitudes that go beyond self-interest or organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger

political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate"
(Vandenabeele, 2007, p. 547). I used Vandenabeele's definition to address U.S. military
appeal and retention and how it explains why many African Americans at the rank of
LTC do not enter the SES after retirement from the military.

I used PSM to understand why the federal government cannot attract African
Americans into SES or SES-equivalent positions. PSM involves self-determined
motivation in public organizations and intrinsic motivation, extrinsic drive, moral duty,
and conduct. Wang et al. (2020) developed a causal map for PSM and said there were
five intrinsic moralities of PSM: care, fairness, authority, loyalty, and sanctity.

Kindness and gentleness are qualities rooted in the five intrinsic moralities of PSM.
First, care entails the capacity to sense other people's suffering (Wang et al., 2020).
Individual rights, liberties, and autonomy are essential for care. Second, fairness involves
acknowledging generosity, encouraging reciprocity, and preventing unfair defection from
an organization (Wang et al., 2020). Third, authority involves valuing social hierarchies
and their legitimacy and appeal, as well as acknowledgment of rank and responsibility of
subordinates to conform (Wang et al., 2020). Fourth, loyalty involves sacrifice for in-
groups and watchfulness for traitors in out-groups. Finally, sanctity involves spiritual
purity of attempting to live in a higher, less sensual, and more noble manner (Haidt,
2012). Sanctity emphasizes the soul's precedence over the body and rigid guidelines for
clean usage of the body and mind (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2020).

In comparison with private sector workers, public employees place a more
significant value on intrinsic benefits such as contribution to society, the common good,

and the significance of work (Aust et al., 2020; Houston, 2000). According to Taylor et al. (2015), there is little specific research on PSM and the military. PSM was effective enough for recruitment (Ngaruiya et al., 2014). Ngaruiya et al. (2014) claimed, "if the military continues to support policies that favor monetary-based recruitment strategies, it may miss out on opportunities to recruit people passionate about serving their nation" (p. 452). The military may not be appealing to those motivated to public service for altruistic reasons.

Once retiring from the military, military officers can choose to fully retire, join the public service or join a private-sector organization. Fareed and Su (2022) explained public employees are not like their private sector colleagues in terms of their drive to work. Various work characteristics, such as care, fairness, and loyalty, drive public administrators to serve the people because they feel an ethical obligation to do so. PSM research involves defining elements of this public service ethic and determining whether government personnel have similar motivations to those in the military (Fareed & Su, 2022). Ritz et al. (2016) explained individuals who attribute their career or work to PSM might suffer desires to continue work for others past reasonable limits, caused by poor work-life balance and employee burnout. Furthermore, employees with high degrees of job commitment who internalize institutional ideals are prone to such job stress and burnout (Ritz et al., 2016).

PSM can also be used to examine military career longevity and retention outcomes. Miao et al. (2018) explained PSM research examining job performance outcomes is relatively new, but studies show that PSM positively influences job

performance. According to Miao et al. (2018), employees with PSM in their current career or job positions are also more likely to engage in "higher levels of organizational identification amongst civil servants and, in turn, leads them to display higher levels of job performance because they view the organization's fate and results as their own" (p. 77). Vandenabeele (2007) argued that in an institutional system like the U.S. military, members acquire a new, unique identity within that institution. This can explain why U.S. military veterans may avoid entering a separate or different institutional system. It will pressure them to adapt to the new social environment, affecting their own identity knowingly or unknowingly (Vandenabeele, 2007).

The section that follows includes a discussion of the concept of organizational trust as it relates to PSM. Next, I examine transactional leadership and the social exchange theory (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Public Service Motivation Research Framework
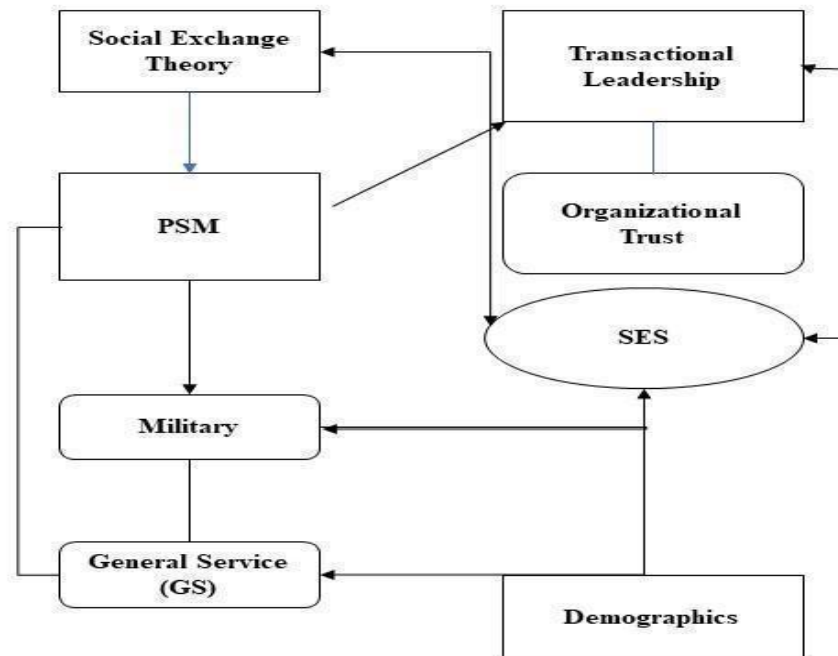
Organizational Trust

Organizational trust is employees' perceptions of their organization's trustworthiness (Gambetta, 1988). System-wide factors such as the fairness of an organization's performance assessment system and job security are linked to confidence in management. The U.S. military system facilitates reliable pay, benefits, and employment longevity due to its governmental position, fostering important organizational trust (Cohen, 2019; Singh & Srivastava, 2016). Of course, organizational trust can falter and diminish corporate trust when the needs and benchmarks of organizational trust are not met. Figure 1 shows organizational trust as the main factor in

promoting employees; this concept can be applied to the senior ranks of GS-14 to GS-15, the SES, and the U.S. military. In the study context, organizational trust is associated with leadership trust, as both the organization and leadership are considered the same. There are exceptions to the rule, such as independent agencies with an unclear hierarchy and human resource management. Moon and Park (2019) indicate that organizational trust is related to performance associated with PSM. For the present research, PSM is a critical factor in the transition from military to civil service, which indicates continued service to the public.

Diversity in the workforce, or lack thereof, can significantly impact workplace equality, respect, and job security, affecting organizational trust (Alshaabani et al., 2021). Alshaabani et al. (2021) argued that by treating employees fairly, regardless of race or cultural background, the company or organization could increase and strengthen "job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, loyalty, performance, and trust" (p. 5). These concepts and factors behind organizational trust pose a compelling and crucial argumentized framework for the study due to the apparent effect diversity has on OT in the workplace.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership involves employees' fulfillment of contractual obligations arising from their tasks or pay for performance (Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018). According to Arenas (2019), this leadership style enforces organizational stability and focuses on completing specific tasks by following administrative rules and guidelines rather than fostering leader-follower relationships (Arenas, 2019). Transactional

leadership involves different intersections working toward the common goal of efficiency and task completion. Actual transactions between leaders and followers mean constructively setting goals and performance expectations of the followers, a concept known as a contingent reward (CR), as the rewards are contingent on the set expectations. The purpose of the CR strategy is for leaders and followers to have mutual expectations. In a constructive transaction, the leader establishes performance goals, which the follower agrees upon, instructions for fulfilling these expectations, and rewards for meeting them. It is critical to maintain consistency in delivering agreed-upon tips on schedule, specifically in military leadership structures and assigned tasks (Arenas, 2019). In Figure 1, transactional leadership is at the top of the concept diagram due to top-down information flow.

Administrative leadership for this research is viewed as transactional based on the nature of the managerial style. Van wart (2013) and Jensen et al. (2019) argued that administrative leadership is the same as transactional, while Samanta and Lamprakis agreed that the transactional leader is not forward-looking. According to Asencio and Mujkic (2016) and Fareed and Su (2022), the leadership style most associated with PSM is transformational. While transactional or administrative leadership is considered efficient and task-based, transformational leadership fosters meaningful relationships between leaders and followers. Transformational leaders inspire their followers to help them achieve more than they ever imagined, allowing them to attain their full potential (Fareed & Su, 2022). The goal of a transformational strategy is to develop followers while also allowing them to achieve higher levels of performance (Arenas, 2019). This

study will examine the transactional leadership style as it is most common in the military and how PSM and transformational leadership affect the factors in transitioning into civil service and SES positions.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) supports the motivations for joining, staying, or even leaving the military. Homans (1958) classified SET as the interchange of action between at least two people, whether material or intangible, rewarding or costly. The actors in the social situation assess cost solely in terms of different types of activities or opportunities foregone (Cook & Rice, 2003). Therefore, SET is a crucial paradigm for evaluating workplace relationships, and its core concept is that human relationships are created due to subjective cost-benefit analysis. Furthermore, people are more inclined to repeat activities that have been rewarded in the past, and the more often given conduct has been awarded, the more likely it will be repeated (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018).

The behaviors enforced via SET can also hinder social equity within social exchanges. For example, the social equity theory is based on the SET and is a cost-benefit analysis of the logic of a given relationship. The cost-benefit analysis in this study and scenario is the relationship between African American officers transitioning from military to government service. Additionally, the relationship between the low rate of African Americans in SES positions is the logic behind this fractured relationship (Newbold & Holzer, 2020). Furthermore, studies of bureaucracy indicate social equity as a cornerstone of public services in a democratic society such as in the US. Specifically, social equity and its role in public administration have been a prominent topic of research

and theory (Anestaki et al., 2016). Thus, in public administration, trust in leadership based on performance must be a priority for sound public policy.

This study looked at SET and how it affects dynamics for African Americans and other military cohorts within the military social setting. The concept of military service is directly related to performance and PSM. Bright (2021) surmised that the purpose of transitioning from the military to civil service is due to the low retirement pay. The military, as mentioned previously, is the epitome of public service, and it stands to reason that transitioning from the military to civil service can be expected to occur. Supporting the call for diversity management, Mousa et al. (2020) argue that equality, respect, appreciation, and minority engagement improve workplace conditions. The study shows that these actions increase personal job satisfaction and continued loyalty and positively contribute to achieving their organization's set of strategies and tactical objectives (Mousa et al., 2020). In terms of African Americans reaching the senior levels of government service, this study must view how positions are staffed to represent the American public. In other words, it is an issue of SET, or equity, in which senior levels are filled.

Literature Review

The literature review section of the chapter gives important background knowledge necessary to understand the purpose of the study, namely, to explore the federal government's inability to attract and retain African Americans in the SES cadre. First, the literature review will include a discussion of the structure of the U.S. military, beginning with the DoD and further examining each military branch. Second, the section

will review motivation for joining the military, as well as different motivating factors for choosing the military as a career, including internal and external motivating factors. Next, the researcher discusses differences between officers and enlisted service members, as this is an important distinction for the present study. Fourth, the literature review includes an examination of military transitions, both within military ranks and the important transition out of military service. Finally, the demographics of the military and the SES, serve as an effective transition to the present study.

Military Structure

Many organizations have a hierarchy, and the military is no different; however, the overall structure can be overwhelming to an outsider or civilian. For example, there are various echelons in the Army, from the team level consisting of four soldiers to a team structure of over 900,000 troops. Within each service, there are rank structures from the lowest enlisted to the highest in the officer corps. Appendix A contains the different branches and their rank structures (the study's focus is strictly on the Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) and higher ranks). An individual with the rank of LTC or above is considered an O-5 to O-10 for pay chart purposes. The difference between enlisted and officer is found in rank and pay grade designations, discussed later in the chapter. The O in O-5 is for officer pay level five and so on (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022b). The same concept applies to enlisted personnel.

Although the ranking structure is standard amongst the branches, the missions and personnel expectations differ. The U.S. Armed forces comprise six distinct branches: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard. These branches

also have sub-branches that this review will not explore directly. When this study

discusses military personnel, it references a soldier or soldiers in one of these branches.

To understand the reasons behind this study, one must grasp the general structure of the

DoD and branches and subsequent duties.

Department of Defense

The DoD is the largest government agency in the United States, providing the

armed forces with the requirements necessary for national defenses (U.S. Department of

Defense, 2022c). Among the various duties upheld within the DoD, one of the most

basic, yet most important, is the responsibility for staffing, equipping, and training the

U.S. military (Congressional Budget Office [CBO], 2021). Although the DoD oversees

11 divisions, this study will examine the functions and structure of the military

departments. Led by separate civilian secretaries, the DoD military departments work

directly with Congress to determine a budget, leadership decisions, and other systemic

changes (CBO, 2021). The military departments include The Department of the Army,

The Department of the Navy, and The Department of the Air Force (U.S. Department of

Defense, 2022b).

The active branches Army, Navy, and Air Force report directly to the DoD as

well as the reserve branches, U.S. Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Marine Corps

Reserve, United States Navy Reserve, and the United States Air Force Reserve (U.S.

Department of Defense, 2022b). The three central departments - Department of the

Army, Department of the Navy, and Department of the Air Force - contain the other

military branches. The U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Navy fall under the purview of

the Department of the Navy, while the U.S. Space Force falls under the purview of the

Department of the Air Force. Additionally, the Coast Guard falls under the purview of

Homeland Security (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

U.S. DoD Simplified Military Structure
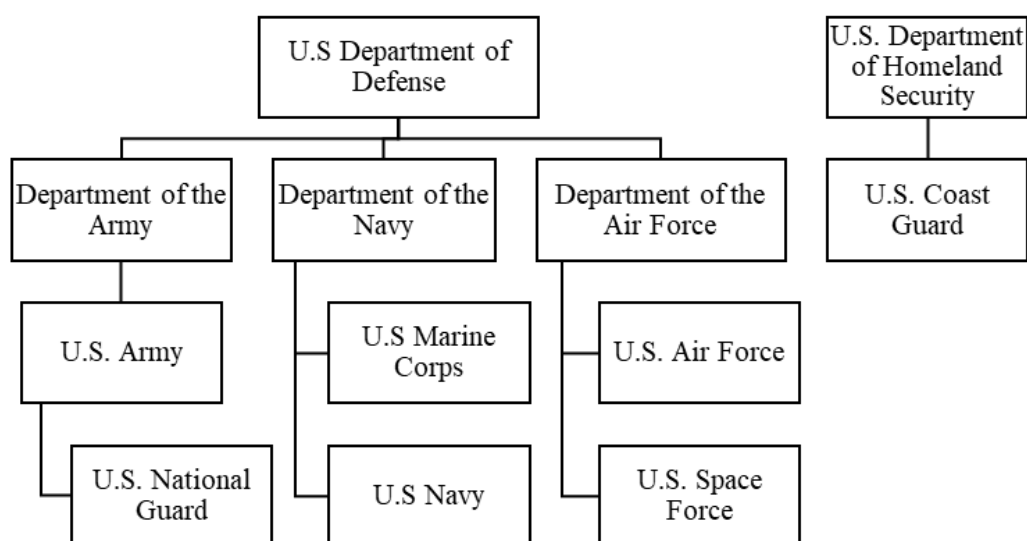
Note. Information in this figure is derived from the U.S. Department of Defense (2022b).

Department of the Army

The Department of the Army, which includes the active and reserve services of

the U.S. Army and the U.S. National Guard, conducts both operational and institutional

missions. The operational Army comprises armies, corps, divisions, brigades, and

battalions worldwide. The institutional Army reinforces the active Army. According to

U.S. Army (2022a), the infrastructure required to raise, train, equip, deploy, and assure

the institutional entities provide the preparedness of all Army units. The oldest military

branch, the Army, is the largest and most expansive branch by numbers. As of 2020, the

Army is made up of 481,254 active-duty members, whereas the Navy comprises 341,996 active-duty members. The Marine corps consists of 180,958 active-duty members, and Air Force employs 329,614 active-duty members (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). Finally, the active-duty personnel in the Army can be expected to deploy to various states across the United States and abroad and engage in tactical and community-based missions (U.S. Army, 2022a).

Department of the Navy

The Department of the Navy includes the U.S. Navy and the U.S Marine Corps. The U.S. Navy's mission is to protect the country at sea alongside allies and global partners. According to the United States Navy (2022), the institution also aims to protect freedom and safeguard economic development. As the Navy is a maritime branch, military personnel can expect to deploy onboard a ship, on a submarine, or on land. Of course, not all Seamen deploy or serve on a vessel; however, all naval missions focus on supporting and securing the safety of the seas (United States Navy, 2022). This study concentrates on the O-5 rank of LTC. Therefore, this study must note that the naval rank equivalent of LTC is Commander (United States Navy, 2022).

According to Johnson (2021), even though the Marine Corps is under the purview of the Department of the Navy, it is the only military branch that is independent while being under another component. The Marines are a minor branch of the military by numbers and are not combined in size with the Navy for statistical and funding purposes. The U.S Marine Corps has a similar command organization to the Army; however, since it is an independent branch but still falls under the Department of the Navy, it emphasizes

maritime responsibilities and missions (Johnson, 2021). The U.S. Marine Corps is organized into four groups: (a) active forces, which conduct the actual combat, (b) command, (c) control, which supports the establishment and provides logistical support; and (d) the Marine Corps Reserve. The Marine Corps also has the highest physical fitness requirement of all the branches and departments, making the unit a unique collation of strength and elite among its cohorts (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022a). Finally, the U.S. Marine's commonly known motto, *Always Faithful* or *Semper Fidelis*, is another ode to the community and commitment which is structurally instilled among marines (United States Marine Corps, 2022).

Coast Guard

The U. S. Coast Guard, which the U.S. Department of Homeland Security oversees, works to counter cyber threats to U.S. ports and mitigate the impact of human activities such as responding to natural disasters and surveying the recession of polar ice caps (United States Coast Guard Academy, 2022). As a result, members of the Coast Guard have experienced similar deployment expectations to their naval and marine counterparts. Still, their deployments are based within the United States and remain community-focused rather than stationed on large military bases (United States Coast Guard Academy, 2022).

Department of the Air Force

The Department of the Air Force consists of the U.S. Air Force and the newly formed U.S. Space Force (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022b). According to the U.S. Air Force (2022), the primary purpose of the U.S. Air Force is to ensure the missions of

"air superiority, global strike, rapid global mobility, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and command and control" (p. 1). In addition, with a focus on cybersecurity and airspace surveillance, the airmen hone skills in aerospace and technology and tactical reconnaissance (U.S. Air Force, 2022). Similarly, the U.S. Space Force, formed in 2019, oversees organizing, training, and equipping astronauts and analysts to undertake global space operations that improve the way joint and coalition forces fight (The United States Space Force, 2022).

Motivation for Joining the Military

Serving in the military is viewed as a patriotic act, serving has symbolic and genuine motivations for those who join (Fransen, 2019; Park & Avery, 2016). According to Druckman (1994), patriotism is defined as "strong attachments and loyalty to one's own group without the corresponding hostility toward other groups" (p. 47). Furthermore, Ford et al. (2013), found that people seek professions where their time is valued and where a greater purpose is being served. Specifically, the study found that the structure of the military, such as its extensive training and aptitude testing, also attracted new military recruits (Ford et al., 2013). Ginexi et al. (1994) indicated that most recruits join the military because of family. In other words, there were family members who once served and exposed these recruits to stories and the honor of service. Perhaps the recruits idolized the sacrifice of the family member and wanted to gain the same experience. Ginexi et al. (1994) also pointed to soldiers wishing to see the world and the idea of having a steady job and income. Additionally, Krebs and Ralston (2022) found that half of their respondents felt that service people join the military for fundamental reasons:

they are real patriots who love their nation or excellent citizens who regard it as their responsibility to serve. The other half of the respondents said that the motivation lies in monetary or personal security (Krebs & Ralston, 2022). Similarly, the perception of service to the country or what we know as PSM. The concept of PSM, which is mentioned earlier, is a significant motivating factor for public service such as the military (Johnson & Walker, 2018).

Military as a Career

Like anything else in life, the reasons for choosing the military as a career varies from person to person. The challenge is recruiting and retaining quality individuals into the military. The motivation to serve can be broken down into internal and external factors. However, both are relative to the individual and vary from person to person. There is no one factor that every individual can point to as a motivating factor (Grigorov, 2020). However, motivational factors can be grouped into internal and external reasons. For example, one can look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs as one factor and identify social status.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that people feel the need to fulfill basic needs before moving on to more advanced needs (Li et al., 2018). In order from simple to complex, the hierarchy includes: (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) love and belonging, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization (Schulte, 2018, Due to its physical fitness requirement, protective nature, communal culture, pride, and mission-driven attributes, a career in the military theoretically ensures all five of these needs (Schulte, 2018; Shue et al., 2021).

The military's prospect of fulfilling specific needs and a PSM offers a substantial drive to join and stay within the military.

Internal Factors

Internal motivating factors for joining and staying in the military include being in an organization with members with the same goal (Grigorov, 2020). Bright (2021) added that motivation might be the ability to retire after 20 years; however, Bright (2021) also warned that staying in retirement is not financially beneficial, which is a driving factor behind moving to the public sector. Nonetheless, the desire to serve something higher than oneself keeps individuals past their initial term (Ginexi et al., 1994). This internal drive can also be attributed to the driving forces behind PSM, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs plays a much broader role in determining individual motivations (Grigorov, 2020). Therefore, perhaps organizational commitment and financial security, among other benefits, serve as a factor in the military's longevity.

External Factors

External factors such as the economy and family ties are significant in determining the recruitment and longevity of military personnel. For example, in one report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), uncertainty in the economy in any given period plays a role in a servicemember's care (United States General Accounting of Gao, 2019). The point is that a decrease in the economy suggests an increase in the number of servicemember retention. Likewise, a better economy indicates that retention will be much more complex. One's financial situation can be a driving factor. This can be seen as both an internal and external decision as financial hardships

ignite internal economic motivations for joining and providing one of the hierarchical

needs (Grigorov, 2020). According to Krebs and Ralston (2022), people with military

experience before 1973 believed that people should join the military out of "deep

commitment to the country" (p. 26). Still, after 1973, the belief shifted that the primary

motivations for entering: financial or material. This is most likely partly because before

1973, people were drafted into the military and had no choice but to serve, and now the

military is classified as an all-voluntary force (AVF; Krebs & Ralston, 2022). Krebs and

Ralston (2022) also described that people are more likely to join the military if a family

member has joined.

Officers and Enlisted Service Members

The differences between an officer and an enlisted service member include

entrance requirements, responsibility, and the pay band. Enlisted members make up

82.4% of the total military personnel, and officers only account for 17.6% (Defense

Manpower Data Center, 2020). According to the Army, there are several paths to

becoming an officer: (a) graduate from a College Reserve Officer Training Corps

(ROTC) program (b) attend West Point, or (c) graduate from Officer Selection Course

(OCS). Another way, according to the Army, is to receive a direct commission. However,

the direct commission route is limited to medical or dental officer corps professions. For

enlisted personnel, the minimum requirement is a high school diploma, but in some cases,

those with a GED are granted military access (U.S. Army, 2022b).

It is important to note that not everyone has the right to join the military. Such

barriers range from age to criminal background. Precisely, to enlist in the military, one

has to be at least 17 years old to join, have a high school degree or GED, must take the

Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test), and one must pass a

military entrance medical exam which differs between the branches. The ASVAB

consists of ten examinations. The results of four of the examinations – Word Knowledge

(WK), Paragraph Comprehension (PC), Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), and Mathematics

Knowledge (MK) – are added together to calculate the Armed Forces Qualification Test

score (AFQT) (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery [ASVAB], 2023). The

Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps utilize AFQT scores to assess eligibility for

enlisting. Finally, the results of the ASVAB examinations are utilized to evaluate which

military profession the candidate will be placed in (ASVAB, 2023).

Each branch has its maximum age requirement for joining, ranging from 28 to 39.

Generally, one will not pass the medical exam if they have any significant chronic

conditions, diseases, deformities, operations, limitations of motion, hearing loss,

consequential vision loss, significant psychological disorders, and obesity, to name a few

(Military.com, 2022). In addition, one must be a U.S. citizen. If a recruit is not a U.S.

citizen, they must hold a residency card, currently live in the US, and speak, read, and

write English fluently (How To Join the United States Military, 2022). Furthermore, if

one has a poor credit history affecting security clearance, is a single parent (unless they

relinquish custody), or have been charged with a felony, among other charges, they are

also disqualified from enlisting in the military (How To Join the United States Military,

2022). As such, there are certain barriers in place that filter potential members into

certain positions. Some of these positions require more academic and physical rigor than

others. Moreover, just like their federal counterparts, there are no gender or race-based quotas to be met. Therefore, it is generally understood that the military represents the U.S. population accordingly.

Once an enlisted member or officer is recruited and has officially entered the military, they can be promoted into different ranks based on various factors. This is important, as those who acquire the LTC rank have achieved specific achievements and appointments. As described previously, the military is based on a hierarchical chain of command system. Therefore, moving up in classes is a significant accomplishment and comes with increased pay, responsibility, and arguably more respect within the military. The higher ranking a member is, the more complex it is to move further in rank. The ranks become more selective, requiring significant responsibility and possibly higher security clearances. Furthermore, each branch has its unique point or score system and benchmarks to achieve before being eligible for the promotion. This system is similar for enlisted and officer members (CBO, 2021).

This study investigated the officer rank of LTC, which is in the O-5 pay rank (see Table 1). LTCs and above are the primary focus because they hold the military and pay rank of O-5 – O-10, equivalent to a General Schedule (GS) rank of G-14 SES Level 1. The highest rank an enlisted member can hold is a Warrant Officer or Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), which falls within the band of W-5 or E-9 (U.S. Army, 2022b). Next, I look at military demographics, which show higher disparities among African American officers, which is another reason to look at LTC transition into SES positions rather than possible NCO promotions.

Military Transitions

First, it is essential to review time commitment standards and the actual processes of how one leaves the military. Depending on which branch and whether an individual is enlisted or an officer, most commitments require four years of active-duty service and two years of inactive or reserve time (Military.com, 2021); however, there are unique situations where one can serve a minimum of three or four total years. Once the military member has satisfied their time requirement, they are eligible for honorable discharge or extending their contract. There are a few ways members can get out of their contract early. However, most of these situations are seen as a punishment. These discharges include administrative separation, breach of contract, medically unfit for duty, hardship discharge, conscience objection, issues with reliability, and dishonorable discharge (Military.com, 2021). Though people can be in the military for their entire career or just six years (some enlisted commitments are less), it can still be difficult to transition out of the military into retirement or civilian jobs.

As each branch or department in the military fosters a unique identity and military culture, transitioning out of such a culture can potentially deter the transition altogether (Shue et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the life span of a military member, very little thought is given to what an individual will do after military service (Cohen, 2019). The military offers a life of strict discipline, a sense of purpose, and dedicated support systems, further complicating transitions into civilian life outside the military by forcing veterans to seek structure and community (Shue et al., 2021). Military life includes orders and instructions on what to do and when unless something is transitioning out of the military. Shue et al.

(2021) explained that studies have found little to no preparation or guidelines for life outside the military among all the military departments.

Furthermore, existing programs offered broad and unhelpful advice for transitioning out. According to the study, this deficiency in preparation can lead to a decline in veterans' mental health and overall quality of life (Shue et al., 2021). Due to the significant transition between military and civilian careers, it is more common for veterans to forgo higher-earning positions in the federal sector to stay in the military (Shue et al., 2021; Vets Headquarters, 2022). According to one report, veterans represent about 30% of the entire federal workforce (FED Week, 2015). The highest numbers remain in their perspective branches as civilian workers rather than taking up a higher position in the federal workforce (Vets Headquarters, 2022). Therefore, the idea of transitioning from the military to civil service can be seen as continuing to serve their nation. According to Johnson and Walker (2018), the DoD is the largest employer globally when considering many veterans and active personnel.

Although veterans earn benefits and regular payments, depending on the veteran's age and other lifestyle factors, it is common for military veterans to seek further employment after retirement. It is accepted that veterans seek similar lines of work, such as within law enforcement, the criminal justice system, or emergency service. Depending on if they have a specific specialty or training, they can transition into the civilian counterpart of that specialty. Many veterans join the federal workforce, making it a suitable and comfortable transition for veterans (Windmueller, 2021).

DoD Military Demographics

I examined the federal government's difficulty to recruit minorities, particularly African Americans, to senior leadership positions in the federal government, particularly the SES. To understand the gravity of the problem, the research aims to understand why there is a lack of African Americans in SES positions. Therefore, I reviewed specific demographics of the U.S. DoD military force. As of 2020, the total DoD military force comprised 70.2% White members and 16.8% Black or African American members (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). Additionally, the DoD military force is comprised of 16.1% Hispanic or Latino, 1% American Indian, 4.5% Asian, 1% Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian, and 6.3% identified as multi-racial or other (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), these percentages are comparable with the population in 2020: 76.3% White and 13.4% African American. However, when the number of active-duty *enlisted* African American and White members is compared to the number of African American active-duty *officers,* there is a distinct difference. According to the 2020 Demographics Report, 19% of active-duty enlisted members are African American, 67.4% are White, while only 9% of active-duty officer members are African American, and 75.8% are White. Sykes and Bailey (2020) explained:

> The shifting prominence of state institutions in the lives of particular demographic groups following a change in social policy or judicial decisions allows more prominent, protective, and integrative institutions to exchange their risk of exposure with less active and more punitive agencies across generations. (p. 30)

African American men specifically are overrepresented in enlisted military ranks because, by the Institutional Casting phenomenon, beginning in 1973, the military sought and enlisted "moderately skilled men from disadvantaged backgrounds" (Sykes & Bailey, 2020, p. 31).

The data also show that since 2010, the number of racial minorities in the U.S. military has not increased significantly: In 2010, racial minorities made up 30.2% of the military; in 2015, it was 32.9%, and in 2020, the makeup was 32.1%. Although the Black population since 2010 has not changed significantly by percentage (13% in 2010, 12.4% in 2020) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2020), it can be argued that the population of racial minorities has changed significantly. In 2010, the White non-Hispanic population made up 63.7%, and in 2020, the White non-Hispanic population dropped to 57.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). However, the data show no significant increase in individual minority groups, such as people identifying as Hispanic or African American. Still, there was a substantial increase in people identifying as Other Hispanic Origins or choosing more than one category in race and ethnicity, accounting for the decrease in the White non-Hispanic population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). These statistics make a case for the lack of diversity in the U.S. military population of the U.S.

Government GS

The GS is the largest employer in the United States, with a rank, classification, and pay structure that closely parallels the military. According to OPM, the total employment in the federal workforce is over 1.8 million people (OPM, 2020). The total employed is a little higher than the active-duty military, which is 1.4 million personnel

(U.S. Department of Defense, 2021). Based on the parallels between active duty and federal employment numbers, we can see the similarity in numbers. However, the rank structure versus the general schedule is different in terms of qualifications and years of service. Therefore, despite the similarities, there are some differences in terms of capabilities.

First, entry-level positions in the government do not require a college education. However, professional occupations such as doctors and other licensed professionals are the same as their civilian counterparts. Therefore, GS levels one through nine can be considered entry-level, which parallels the enlisted ranks E-1 through E-9. Table 1 juxtaposes the military and civilian ranks, which suggest similar responsibilities regarding their position and pay rates. As we can see, an O-5 would transition to a GS-14 career position. A W-4 would transition onto a GS-9, and likewise, an O-10 general could transition to the SES.

Table 1

Military to Civilian Ranks and Pay Grades

Military Grade	Rank	Civilian Grade
O-7 to O-10	General Officer(s)	SES, Steps 1-6
O-1 to O-6	Lieutenant to Colonel	GS-7 to GS-15
W-1 to W-5	Warrant to Chief Warrant	GS-7 or GS-9
E-1 to E-9	Enlisted Ranks	GS-1 to GS-6

Note. Source: Naval History, www.history.navy.mil

Senior Executive Service

The SES was created because of the 1979 Civil Service Reform Act. Its purpose is defined as "to ensure that the executive management of the Government of the United

States is responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the nation and otherwise is of the highest quality" (OPM, 2021, p. 4). The 2020 OPM guide lists six essential competencies that apply across the board: (a) interpersonal skills; (b) oral communication; (c) integrity/honesty; (d) written communication; (e) continual learning; and (f) PSM (OPM, 2021). Using the bureaucratic theory, Max Weber assumed that efficiency and economic effectiveness were essential to the system. The system refers to processes within an organization, whether government or private. Weber's bureaucratic theory supports the prevalent leadership theory in the military, offering practical and immediate results (Mommsen, 2021). Achieving LTC military veteran status does not automatically qualify one for an SES position. However, the position meets some of the qualifications for applying to the SES and obtaining the rank of GS-15 (OPM, 2021).

To become an SES member, one must go through a rigorous process to meet the six competencies mentioned previously and apply these to what is known as the executive core qualities (ECQs). According to one report, only one out of four SES has had executive leadership training (Koonce, 2017). The application process is not as rigorous as military training nor as complex; however, the process does require review by a board that typically verifies the substance of a resume. There are two routes to becoming an SES member: direct hire by an agency or attend a senior executive candidate course that lasts up to 12 months (OPM, 2021). According to the OPM guide to executive service, candidates are chosen on their qualifications and not their demographics, nor do they have demographic benchmarks to achieve. The U.S. government works most effectively when the "Nation's workforce reflects the

communities it serves, and when the public servants are fully equipped to advance equitable outcomes for all American communities" (Executive Order No. 14035, 2021, p. 3).

This executive order includes seven parts to amplify DEIA within the federal workforce, emphasizing access to opportunities and equitable pay for employees. Though the order does explicitly not change SES hiring requirements, it does allocate funding for DEIA training, recruitment, paid internships, data collection, professional development, and disability pay equity (Executive Order No. 14035, 2021). Additionally, Gathers-Whatley and Chase (2018) explained significant inclusion and diversity directives within the U.S. government hiring and research the barriers faced when advancing into SES careers. However, there is little to no follow-up research on the experiences of minorities within these SES roles. This study aims to investigate these experiences further.

Demographics of the SES

Not enough minorities are selected to serve in SES positions (Gathers-Whatley & Chase, 2018). Clarke et al. (2013) attempted to tie race and gender to a perceived systematic bias; however, conjecture is the only evidence listed. Furthermore, the statistics do not reflect motivation to serve as an SES or if they want the positions or not. Instead of leadership qualities, Clarke et al. (2013) focused on race and gender as qualifiers. Racial diversity is reflective of the U.S. population (Congressional Research Service [CRS], 2012). The OPM (2021) showed a slight decrease in White males serving as SES members. People group themselves into categories to lift self-esteem and, in some cases, other groups down, for examples. When people put themselves into a category,

their outlook on others is suspicious, pessimism, and condescendence. These attitudes must be removed from the public service sector (Moon, 2016).

, Moon (2016) argued that very little research in public administration has sought to examine how diversity influences work-related outcomes. Clarke et al. (2013) claimed that President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address statement of "For the people, by the people, and of the people" refers to bureaucratic representation. Clarke et al. (2013) believed differently, noting that the quote related to people electing other familiar people versus a select self-proclaimed elite. It is fair to point out that the literature does indicate a perceived bias but, at the same time, does not show the percentage of each demographic who applied versus selection.

Diversity and work-related outcomes are factors in job satisfaction, turnover intention, and performance (Moon, 2016). This can be said of any career field at any time. It is not limited to the SES, nor is it indicative of perceived bias at the federal level. The SES exit survey does not support this theory; however, it does not negate either. Further research into diversity affecting the SES is needed. It is also noteworthy that the 2018 FEVS did not indicate a diversity issue or problems with a lack of diversity. Diversity appears to be the prominent factor in using an agency or member's characteristics to predict performance. Race should never be a factor in the quality of leadership or the quality of an agency within the federal government. Nevertheless, there is a desire amongst scholars to prove otherwise.

According to the OPM (2020), non-Hispanic and white made up 79% of SES members, followed by non-Hispanics and African Americans at 10%. Clarke et al. (2013)

believed diversity should reflect the U.S. population, which is not a wrong concept; however, there is an assumption that as one population increases, so should the number of SES members increase. This should be categorically rejected as it indicates a replacement of quality for demographics outside the scope of professional abilities. One is not to say more African Americans should not be hired, but SES members should be reflective of their working abilities. If this leads to one higher demographic, then that is fair if the concept is based on overall qualifications.

It is noteworthy that the number of racial minority women selected for SES positions has only increased from 2,666 in 2013 to 2,689 in 2017 (OPM, 2021). Why this increase is so low is not specified. The average age of SES members is 54.6, which is up .2 years from 2013. The average length of service is 22 years. It is also important to note that this statistic is total federal service and not SES length of service. The education level of SES members is salient as the majority (46.5%) have a master's degree, mostly earned in the Baltimore and Washington DC area (Statista Research Department, 2022).

The OPM data indicate that the total number of African Americans employed was 351,313 out of a total of 1.8 million personnel (U.S. OPM Office of Strategy & Innovation Data Analysis Group (DAG), 2019). Therefore, the SES demographics include 7,794, with African Americans representing 859 (11%) total employed in the SES (OPM, 2020). However, the number of prior service members who have transitioned from the military to federal service is unclear, as no such data is offered on the OPM website (OPM, 2020). In addition, military and federal workforce structures are quite

different and may provide insight into the problem of low African American numbers in SES federal positions.

Precisely how a civil servant is selected to become an SES member is open to interpretation. The non-career member is appointed by the President, Vice-President, or agency head; these are the political appointees. Career SES members have a selection process. The 2020 SES Guide indicates the process; however, the process has never been available for public viewing, nor was an exit survey taken for the QRB. Generically we must assume that the five ECQs and six competencies are indeed determining factors. How they are a factor is unknown. There is also no indication of what percentage of SES members were in a candidate selection course (CSC) sponsored by an agency. The last known example was given by Statista Research Department (2022) in which 41% indicated other as a dominant contributor to their professional career. The 'other' category is considered social interactions, but further research is required to understand what is 'social.'

Comparing the Rank of LTC and Higher to SES

The rank of LTC or higher and SES positions both require different responsibilities and garner diverse expectations. LTC and higher positions can typically be achieved after 16 to 22 years of service. Therefore, it is common that officers to retire in this position (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). This time frame of 22 years of experience is similar to those accepted into SES positions. Actual duties of an LTC officer can include high-ranking, combat specialty officers, engineering, science and technical officers, executive, managerial and administrative officers, healthcare officers,

human resource officers, media and public affairs officers, protective service officers, support service officers, and transportation officers which means that any post-military work may be constrained or influenced by a particular specialty (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). However, SES members take on a more general administrative position, depending on which department they are assigned.

There were only 13 (5.3%) African American commanders out of 213 combatant commands (Brook, 2020) and the OPM (2021) indicates 859 African American SES or roughly 11% of the SES population. Comparatively, African Americans hold 8.2% of positions in the O4 to O6 rank (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). These numbers suggest a low rate of African Americans serving at the command level and in SES positions. However, the figures do not show the application percentage versus the percentage of acceptance. In short, the numbers suggest overlooking African American, but it is not clear if the percentage rate of applicants is lower than average. The low number of African American SES and O-5 serving in command deserves further review.

Gaps in Literature

According to Taylor et al. (2015), there is little specific research on PSM and the military. Recent studies examined the role of PSM in military-connected firms, but these authors noted the lack of research on PSM and the military itself (Harymawan et al., 2021). In addition, after an extensive literature search, no studies were found that examined the inability of the federal government to attract minorities, specifically African Americans, to serve in federal public sector senior leadership positions.

Choi (2011) investigated the relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational justice and their work-related attitudes but did not specifically address how minority employees perceive organizational justice. The study calls for further research on the subject, which is what this study aims to do. Fareed and Su (2022) addressed the theory of work motivation to investigate the underlying mechanisms through which PSM contributes to the success of public projects still needs to address the underlying racial mechanisms.

As no literature specifically addresses the gap in the literature related to the problem of the inability of the federal government to attract minorities, specifically African Americans, to serve in federal public sector senior leadership positions. This study sought to address the gap in the literature through a qualitative interview approach. This study also contributed to the literature gap by addressing previous studies.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter included a review of literature regarding why more African American LTCs do not enter the SES after retirement from the U.S. military. First, I examined PSM as well as related concepts such as organizational trust, transactional leadership, and the SET. Then, I explored recent literature and statistics regarding the problem as well as the military and federal service. I addressed military structure, motivations for joining the military, military as a career, military transitions, DoD military demographics, and the SES. Finally, I addressed gaps in literature. Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the methodology. I discuss the method, design, approach, population, and sample. Data collection and analysis procedures are also examined.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The propensity of individuals to change careers has intensified over the past 30 years, especially as the labor market has become more transactional in nature (McGinley, 2018). Importantly, many individuals no longer take a traditional approach to their careers and have adopted more adaptive and self-directed approaches to career management (Shoss, 2017). Unlike civilians who voluntarily choose to transition careers, military service members who wish to remain in the workforce must change careers upon retirement from the military (LePage, 2020). Senior military officers, defined in this study as military officers retiring at the O5 level and above, are no exception. Senior military officers learn and exhibit a variety of leadership and management skills during their military service, making this elite population of individuals highly desirable employees in the civilian workforce (LePage, 2020). 18-45% of senior military officers transitioning out of active-duty military service transition back into the DoD as civilian employees (Biniecki & Berg, 2020). However, there is a lack of diversity within the federal workforce OPM, 2021).

PSM involves considering human motivation to serve society's interests and explain individual behavior. This study involved exploring PSM of retired senior-level African American military officers who elected to take employment with a federal government agency. Specifically, the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the federal government's inability to attract and retain African Americans in the SES via lived experiences of retired African American senior military officers who currently work for the federal government as civilian employees, but not as contractors.

Chapter 3 contains information regarding the research methodology and design. In addition, information is provided on the target population and procedures used to determine their eligibility and final selection of study participation. Detailed information about 'my role in qualitative studies, research instruments used in the study, and data collection and analysis methods are also provided. Finally, the chapter includes a discussion of central issues that are pertinent to ensuring quality research, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability, as well as ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

To address the study, the following research questions were devised:

RQ1: What are perceptions of retired African American senior military officers about public service in the federal government as civilian employees as a second career choice after retirement from the military?

RQ2: What motivating factors contribute to retired African American senior military officers' public service career choices after military retirement?

A qualitative methodology was used to gain firsthand information about the research problem from the perspectives and lived experiences of participants. Qualitative research studies are naturalistic and inductive and involve people's lives, lived experiences, emotions, behaviors, perceptions, feelings, and overall phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers choose the qualitative design when they do not have knowledge or only partial or incomplete knowledge regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Levitt et al., 2018). In addition, according to Yin

(2016), qualitative research involves examining how people perceive their upbringing and social conduct in the context of real-world events. Since the problem I sought to address is that little is known about PSM of African American senior military officers to continue their careers as civilian employees in the federal government, a qualitative methodology was most appropriate for the study.

Quantitative and mixed methodologies were not chosen for this study. Quantitative methodologies involve formal, objective, deductive, and systematic strategies for generating and refining knowledge in order to solve problems. Unlike qualitative methods, quantitative methods involve answering questions regarding how many, how much, and to what extent a phenomenon occurs in a population or subpopulation (Mohajan, 2018). Since research questions involved descriptions of phenomena according to senior military officers rather than statistics, the quantitative methodology was not selected for the study. Similarly, the mixed methods approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies, was not chosen for the study due to the lack of a quantitative component in research questions. Therefore, I used a qualitative descriptive design to give a detailed account of problems and trends highlighted by the participants. Specifically, the chosen qualitative research methodology allowed for a deep understanding of senior military officers' perceptions of public service in the federal government as civilian employees after retirement from the military.

Research studies of qualitative nature offer researchers several distinctive designs from which to select. According to Creswell (2013), there are five designs that are suitable for advancing qualitative inquiry: narrative, case study, grounded theory,

ethnography, and phenomenology. The phenomenology approach was best suited to

address research questions. Phenomenology is a research method that is used to describe

a phenomenon by investigating individual' viewpoints and frames of mind among those

who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenology involves delineating why and how something was experienced.

Research questions were designed to elicit detailed explanations from participants about

factors that shaped their motivations to seek employment in the public sector. The

phenomenological qualitative research design was chosen because it was the most

suitable research design for the study.

Role of the Researcher

The integrity of qualitative research depends on skills, competence, and

thoroughness of researchers. In this qualitative study, I was the instrument. I conducted

semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions with participants who were

eligible to participate in the study. When working with human subjects, researchers must

follow ethical norms by guaranteeing confidentiality, voluntary participation, and a

thorough knowledge of requirements of the study (Moustakas, 1994). As the sole

research instrument, I selected participants who met participant criteria, conducted semi-

structured interviews, ensured participants' data were protected, assured that participants

did not influence data collection, limited any researcher bias, interpreted responses of

participants, minimizing any bias or predetermined viewpoints, analyzed interview data

using NVivo version 12, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program,

and made suppositions grounded in emerging themes from data involving PSM.

Researchers are required to provide pertinent information regarding their training, experience, and known biases (Patton, 2014). This information sharing allows for and is essential in terms of discovering hidden biases that may be present that could later corrupt study findings (Patton, 2014). Researcher bias can manifest in all study development and execution (Maxwell, 2012). A bias can be described as an inclination that intercepts unprejudiced consideration of the research question. For instance, bias can happen during any research phase, such as data collection, results analysis, or the study's design (Maxwell, 2012). Mitigation attempts are required to avoid or significantly lessen debased result generation. Ahern (1999), while acknowledging the effects of bias in research studies, asserted that total objectivity is neither achievable nor necessarily desirable in qualitative research. However, there is a requirement for researchers to make a considerable effort to detach their personal bias from research.

Qualitative researchers use bracketing or Epoche as a way to suspend their understanding methods and reduce preconceptions that may deteriorate or taint research findings (Fischer, 2009). After the use of bracketing or Epoche, what remains is a data byproduct that more accurately reflects the perspectives of the study participants (Fischer, 2009). Bracketing is a qualitative research technique to mitigate the potential detrimental preconceptions in the study. Thus, as an African American who retired from the military and held a position in the federal government, I ensured significant effort was made to practice bracketing by suspending judgment during the data collection and analysis processes. However, the processes through which bracketing takes place are poorly understood due to a shift away from its phenomenological origins. This will help lessen

the introduction of corrupting personal bias due to close researcher connection to the topic of examination.

A plan to reduce bias should also mandate that researchers be mindful of personal and professional relationships with study participants. These relationships offer added opportunities for researcher bias to manifest. These enhance the richness of data received while conducting the study. Types of relationships will be strictly avoided. The list of potential participants were screened for individuals with whom the researcher has personal or professional relationships. Any individual identified as being in a social relationship with the researcher was excluded from study participation. This bias mitigation step coupled with bracketing assisted and supported the assimilation of the in-depth lived experience phenomenology data that is as free as possible of myopic influence. Furthermore, the role of the researcher was to emphasize the impactful individual attributes and situations have on motivation for public service.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The general population for the study was African American senior military officers who retired from the military at a rank of O-5 or greater. The target population for this study was senior-level African American military officers who retired from the military at the rank of O-5 or higher and currently work for the federal government as civilian employees, not as contractors. Typically, in qualitative research, sample sizes are dictated by the technique used but generally are very small (Cooper et al., 2006). Robson (2002) suggested that the pre-selection of sample size is difficult to postulate, and data

collection should continue until saturation is reached. The saturation point in this study would be when no new data on the phenomena emerge during interviews. According to Creswell (2009), phenomenological research involves extensive interaction and engagement with a small number of study participants. Using this rationale for sample size selection, I recruited 15 participants, and data saturation was reached.

The inclusion criteria used to select participants were as follows:

1. Participants must have retired from the military after at least 20 years of service

2. Participants must have retired at the rank of O-5 or above

3. Participants must be of African American descent

4. Participants must currently work in the federal public sector as civilian employees, not as contractors.

According to Hennink and Kaiser (2022), data saturation is the term used to describe the data collection stage when no new issues or insights are discovered, and data begin to repeat, resulting in repetitive data collection and sufficient sample size. In order to ensure content validity, saturation is a crucial sign that a sample is adequate for the issue under investigation and that the data acquired has accurately reflected the range, importance, and complexity of the issues under investigation (Francis et al., 2010; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The sample size of at least 15 participants was selected because this is the sample size that generally ensures that data saturation is reached in a phenomenological inquiry (Guest et al., 2020; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Specifically, Guest et al. (2020) demonstrated that a sample size of 12 participants leads to data saturation in 98% of interview-based qualitative studies. Data saturation was observed after 11

interviews. However, I conducted an additional five interviews to ensure that saturation had been reached.

I used purposeful sampling as the main method to select participants that met the inclusion criteria of the study. According to Palinkas et al. (2016), in qualitative research, purposeful sampling is frequently used to find and choose samples that are information-rich and relevant to the study's topic. Purposeful sampling is a strategy that deliberately selects specific individuals, events, and settings due to the crucial and important information that can help understand the research problem (Yin, 2016). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explained that purposeful sampling entails identifying and choosing people or groups of people who have extensive expertise or experience in a particular field. In this study, purposeful sampling was used to select participants who understood the phenomenon under study, namely the public service motivation of African American senior military officers who transitioned into working in the federal public sector after retirement from the military. In the case that purposeful sampling did not yield enough participants to reach data saturation, the researcher planned to employ snowball sampling, where current participants are asked to nominate other participants that meet the inclusion criteria (Parker et al., 2019). Importantly, a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling has been shown to reduce sampling bias in qualitative studies (Johnson et al., 2020).

Instrumentation

The data collection involved two qualitative instruments. The first was a purposeful sampling questionnaire designed by the researcher to gauge participant

eligibility through demographic data collection. This step was completed first to ensure participants met the inclusion criteria and gathered other relevant demographic data, which is important for the interpretation of study results (Allan, 2020). This instrument allowed the researcher to recruit senior military officers who fit this study's requirements and gain more information about the participants' backgrounds.

The second instrument used in this study was a structured interview comprising key questions about the participants' experiences with PSM in their second career in the federal sector after retirement from the military. Swanson and Holton (2005) suggested that interviews are a primary data collection method in qualitative studies. Interviews typically fall into three distinct categories known as unstructured, structured, or semi-structured (Cooper et al., 2006). The interview type that offers the most significant degree of interviewer flexibility is unstructured. During this type of interview, no specific questions or topic order is mandated. The structured interview takes on a systematic approach. An interview guide dictates the specific order of open-ended questions asked of participants. Finally, the semi-structured interview is a free-flowing process where the interviewer begins with a set of specific questions, thus allowing participants to participate actively in charting the direction of the interview.

The researcher chose to use structured interviews for this study. Some of the advantages of structured interviews include decreased bias, increased validity, and cost-effectiveness (Segal et al., 2006). The predetermined questions will be more credible and reliable, and consistent, allowing all participants to answer the questions in a specific order. Some drawbacks to structured interviews include restricted flexibility and limited

scope (Segal et al., 2006). Due to the nature of structured questions, participants might not be able to give a more detailed answer that is generalizable to the general population (Segal et al., 2006). In addition, the formality of a structured interview might make the participants feel a bit more nervous.

The instrument used in this study was developed and first utilized in a research project conducted by Kathy Wardlaw in 2009, and based on the results of that research, has proven to be valid, reliable, and able to withstand the rigors of academic research. Previously, the instrument has been used to investigate the general military retiree population and did not exclusively target those that retired at senior military grades. Since this study targeted a specific demographic within the more significant military retiree population, modifications to the instrument were made to make it appropriate for the target population. The designer granted permission for the use and modifications of the instrument (Appendix B). The instrument consisted of 17 questions related to the PSM of retired senior-level African American military officers. It supported the focus of phenomenological inquiry, collecting lived experience data (see Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

Data Collection Procedures

If candidates met the inclusion criteria, they were informed by email that they have been selected for the interviews. After the identification of the participants, the researcher gave each selected participant an overview of this study, including a summary of the expectations of their participation. Following that, the researcher provided and reviewed an informed consent form with each participant, as is customary (see Geier et al., 2021). This allowed the researcher to acknowledge and confirm the willingness of

each participant to participate in the research. Informed consent forms were required prior to the scheduling of interviews. The signed consent form ensured the voluntary participation of the participants. Further, participants were notified that if they felt uncomfortable with the methods used in this study, they could remove themselves from the study without penalty.

I used Calendly to schedule the planned interviews for the participants at a date and time that is mutually convenient for each individual participant and the researcher. One-on-one interviews were conducted via Zoom to ensure the safety of both participants and myself amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This data collection method is the most appropriate as it allows for direct engagement with the African American senior military officers who have transitioned into the federal public sector after retirement from the military yet provides convenience, comfort, and flexibility for participants. I conducted the interview sessions, asked open-ended questions and sought clarification for any parts of the interview that may have been misunderstood.

Audio recordings of the interviews were taken with the consent of the participants. The audio recordings, in turn, were used for the transcription of data collected in this study. The duration of each interview was 45-60 minutes to allow time for each participant to expand on their ideas; during the interview, I used journaling to ensure reflexivity and took field notes to capture essential impressions or changes in tone. I manually transcribed the interview line by line to confirm the transcriptions' validity and accuracy using Microsoft Word. To help ensure accuracy, all the interviews were transcribed within a 72-hour period in order to ensure my own familiarity with the

responses. The interview transcriptions were sent to participants for member-checking to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions and any requested changes will be made to ensure that the participants' intentions were accurately captured (see Candela, 2019). Participants were provided the opportunity to verify the accuracy of captured data by reviewing their interview transcripts via email (Creswell, 2009). Participants were also informed that if they wished to remove themselves from the study, they could do so without fear of repercussion.

There were no discrepant cases, such as participants who no longer wish to participate in the study. Once the interview sessions were complete and the interview transcriptions had been member-checked by the participants, each audio recording and interview transcript was saved. The audio files from the interviews were saved with pseudonyms P1, P2, …, and P16 for confidentiality and to ensure that participants' personal information was safeguarded (see Hamilton & Finley, 2019). Data collection will be considered complete when after all interview transcripts have been member-checked by the participants and assigned an appropriate pseudonym.

Data Analysis Plan

Content analysis was used to analyze the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews because it is a common form of analysis for large amounts of verbal data (Lindgren et al., 2020). According to Elliott (2018), a researcher must examine the data, identify themes, categorize themes, and perform the final data analysis to form a cohesive data-based argument. Data analysis is a methodical approach to working with obtained data, structuring it, and placing it in manageable pieces that can be analyzed for the

identification of themes (Raskind et al., 2019). The basic goal of the data analysis process is to organize data, look for patterns, uncover themes to determine important information related to the research problem and questions, while combining the results in a way that allows the researcher to draw conclusions (Raskind et al., 2019).

Content analysis was used to find cohesive instances, essential themes, and patterns in the data acquired from the interviews. Unlike quantitative research, the research used focused on allowing a deeper connection and investigation of the phenomenon of public service motivation of African American senior military officers transitioning to the federal public sector after retirement from the military. According to Blanco and Rossman (2021), the data analytic process is comprised of seven phases, including (a) organizing the data, (b) immersion of the researcher in the data, (c) generating ideas for case summaries and possible themes, (d) coding the data, (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos and connecting the data to previous literature and to the theoretical framework chosen for the study, (f) searching for alternative understandings of the data, and (g) writing the formal presentation of the study. I employed each of these steps in the study.

In analyzing the data, I looked for broad themes and major ideas of the participants. To aid in the data analysis and thematic coding process, NVivo Version 12 was utilized. All information was coded and synthesized in conjunction with the appropriate data analysis process, as described in Merriam and Tisdell (2015). Moreover, Creswell (2013) stated, "The process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information" (p. 184). I conducted the coding process in

order to interpret data in smaller descriptive units. Coding captures significant ideas

surrounding the data without losing meaning (Saldaña, 2021). The next step in the data

analysis process was to develop constructs or categories. The process was performed

according to research question n using the following process: code, sort, synthesize and

lastly theorize. Due to having an epistemological research question that sought to

understand the phenomenon of African American senior military officers' perceptions of

PSM, the initial coding methods included descriptive, narrative, and theming techniques.

A list of initial codes was compiled and grouped through developed anchor codes,

in a manner that includes tallying the frequency and generating categories that addressed

the research questions, again following the models of Creswell (2013) and Saldaña

(2021). I sorted the data collected by determining if a group of codes makes reference to

a specific research question or theme, determining how many times a specific code is

attached to portions of the data, and lastly determining if there are underlying meanings

of the codes. During the second stage of coding and in accordance with Creswell (2013),

I used a combination of pattern, axial, and focused coding techniques to further identify

the themes. I used the elements or components of PSM to group the participant's

responses into themes.

Trustworthiness

Ensuring research projects yield reliable and valid results should be of paramount

concern for any researcher. Langdridge (2008) contended that quantitative research offers

a more established foundational basis to assess criteria related to quality. The significant

terms to describe quality in research differ in quantitative and qualitative research yet

parallel each other. Credibility in qualitative research relates to internal validity in quantitative methods. When speaking of eternal validity in quantitative research, concerns for transferability would surface in the qualitative examination. In qualitative studies, dependability equates to reliability in quantitative studies. Finally, qualitative inquiry is concerned with conformability, while quantitative endeavors seek objectivity. Regardless of the terms used to describe the quality measure, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability should be critical elements of any good research measurement tool (Cooper et al., 2006). The ultimate consideration is that integrating these quality benchmarks into research study designs is vital because they assist with the confirmation of findings and provide evidence that researcher objectives were satisfied (Bryman, 2017). Lincoln and Guba (1985) advanced a four-principal system to judge the merit of qualitative research that encouraged the inclusion of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. I applied the above principles to promote trustworthiness in this study.

Credibility

A study is said to be credible when it accurately captures the perspectives of its participants. According to Morse (2015), the term credibility is similar to internal validity and refers to a person's views in a qualitative investigation. Participants can trust the findings of published research because they believe them to be their own, therefore this study can be regarded as credible because the study participants answered honestly, and the recordings would not be altered in any manner to ensure that they truly reflect

the participant's experiences (Cilesiz, 2011). One major factor that can mitigate threats to credibility in this study is the study design. Importantly, the qualitative descriptive design was chosen because it presents the participants' viewpoints, thereby ensuring that the participants' perceptions are not overpowered by the researcher's beliefs. Credibility can also be ensured through the use of verbatim quotations from the participants in the reporting of themes and sub-themes (Daniel, 2019). I addressed credibility through the use of memoing and journaling, so as to ensure and understand the reflexivity of the researcher, and the use of verbatim quotations from the participants.

Member checking was another method used to address the study's credibility (Johnson et al., 2020). As described in the data collection procedures section, member checking involves sending the participants a copy of their interview transcript prior to data analysis to ensure that the interview transcript accurately reflects the research subjects' attitudes, perceptions, and views (Candela, 2019; Johnson et al., 2020). Member checking is the primary method of verifying the credibility of a study since, in qualitative research, the participants are the best judge of their own experiences.

Transferability

The ability to apply findings to various social settings illustrates the transferability of a study (Merriam, 2009). Transferability looks to answer the questions surrounding the extent to which the results of the study can be generalized or applied to other groups, contexts, or settings (Lindgren et al., 2020). Creswell and Poth (2018) note that the transferability of a research study can be ensured by providing enough details on the procedures used to carry out the study. Hence, I provided a concise and detailed

description of the methods and the processes used to derive conclusions from the research data. The study also used sampling sufficiency and thick description to enhance transferability (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Sampling sufficiency is how a qualitative descriptive study contains the appropriate sample size representing the phenomenon and population. A thick description lets the consumer of the information comprehend the study's phenomenon and compare it to other circumstances (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Dependability relates to the replication degree whereby results are deemed consistent. This element is often difficult to achieve in qualitative studies because researchers cannot wholly replicate the initial study's circumstances (Bryman, 2017; Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest using an audit system to document exact methods and procedures to achieve consistent study results when employed by different researchers. Merriam (2009) also advocates for using an audit system to increase dependability along with triangulation and peer-reviewing. An audit system combined with an attempt to triangulate various data sets heighten the dependability measure of this study.

Confirmability

According to Bryman (2017), it is impossible to achieve total objectivity in research. Conformability relates to the reasonable faith efforts to remain as objective as possible that researchers put forth. Shenton (2004) affirms that the finished project should exhibit the reflections of participants rather than those of the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) again suggest the audit systems, triangulation as a technique to enhance

conformability. In addition, Creswell (2013) posits that acknowledgment of any researcher's predisposition is also a component of enhancing conformability. I first identified any bias before collecting data and attempt to suspend all judgment. The same audit and triangulation measures taken to ensure other elements of quality should assist in ensuring this study met the standards of conformability.

Ethical Procedures

Research can present risks to the participants. As such, it is essential that the researcher ensure that the well-being of the participants is maintained throughout the research duration (Connelly, 2016). Adhering to set ethical standards through the process ensures the well-being of the subjects. These set standards were clearly outlined in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). They include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. I adhered to these three ethical standards throughout the entirety of the study. Respect for persons involves recognizing the autonomy of the research participants. Respect for persons was demonstrated by providing all participants with information about the research study, as this augments their informed consent. I also gave the participants informed consent forms with information about the study, as well as ensure the voluntary participation of the participants. The principle of beneficence is concerned with the risks and benefits of the research and the report states that the participants who bare the greatest risk should directly benefit from the research (Arifin, 2018). Beneficence was ensured by informing all the participants of the risks and benefits involved in the study. Importantly, the participants themselves stand to benefit from the

research, as African American retired senior military officers are the population that is affected by the research problem. The principle of justice is concerned with ensuring that the procedures applied in the study are fair and that all the participants have an equal chance to participate (Beauchamp, 2008). All the participants were provided with an equal opportunity to take part in the study and an equal chance to provide their views, perceptions, and attitudes in the semi-structured open-ended interview process.

Progressively stringent requirements to protect study participants from harm have existed since the 1960s (Ahern, 1999). To ensure absolute compliance with university ethical standards during this study, permission to conduct research was requested from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting any data. After approval was granted, the IRB's procedural guidelines were adhered to at all times. Additionally, before the data collection study, participants were provided general information concerning the approach to the study and what to expect as data collection progressed. This increased participant understanding, and researcher utilization of external resources designed to reduce ethics violations helped mitigate occurrences. Organizations such as the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and the National Institute of Health (NIH) offer comprehensive training programs to enhance investigators' ethical research knowledge base. As a method of preparing to deal with the human subject during the study, I completed a course on the protection of human research participants offered by the NIH. A certificate signifying successful course completion is attached as Appendix C.

Participants were provided with informed consent forms and formal invitation letters that served to make their participation in the study official. The informed consent forms provided information on the nature of the study and the researcher's plans to maintain anonymity and confidentiality for the participants in the study. All the participants were informed that if they felt uncomfortable with the research, they could terminate their participation in the research study without penalty or fear of repercussion. The participants were notified of the potential risks and benefits gained by participating in the study after completing the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), researchers should inform participants of the potential risks involved in the study and potential benefits arising after the research study's completion. The study did reveal the government agencies in which the participants serve to preserve confidentiality, and each participant was referred to by a pseudonym in all files derived from the study. All participants were informed of the mechanisms employed by the researcher to protect their confidentiality.

All the data gathered during the collection process remained confidential until I assigned pseudonyms. I responsibly stored all the data, which will be kept safely for five years until the research study is published (Hurst et al., 2020). I will also store informed consent forms for future use in case conflict arises from the study. Records will be stored and maintained following the state and federal statutes that govern research procedures. Once the study is published, the records will be disposed of safely to ensure the confidentiality of the study.

Summary

I aimed to examine PSM of African American senior military officers who transitioned into the federal public sector as civilian employees after retirement from the military. Chapter 3 includes an overview of data collection procedures for the study and lays the groundwork for results presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 3 began with an introduction explaining the need for the study by recapping the problem as well as the purpose. Next, I reviewed research questions and discussed the qualitative research methodology. I explained why the qualitative methodology was appropriate for the study, namely because the purpose of this study was to understand participants' perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs regarding their PSM. Next, I included a discussion of why quantitative and mixed methodologies were not chosen for the study. The phenomenological research design was most appropriate for the study. Next, I included a discussion of my role as the researcher and reflexivity protocols that were used to mitigate researcher bias.

I then discussed specific methodologies I used to select participants and collect and analyze data. During this discussion, inclusion criteria used to select participants and ensure their eligibility for the study were identified. After a detailed discussion of the methodology, the chapter included an examination of trustworthiness by discussing procedures to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. Finally, I discussed ethical considerations of the study and reviewed steps that were taken to protect participants' confidentiality.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the U.S. federal government's inability to attract and retain African Americans in SES via lived experiences of retired African American military officers who currently work for the federal government as civilian employees, but not as contractors. I used a phenomenological approach to understand this topic. To explore participants' lived experiences in-depth, I conducted 16 interviews using a semi-structured methodological design. The following research questions were devised:

RQ1: What are perceptions of retired African American senior military officers about public service in the federal government as civilian employees as a second career choice after retirement from the military?

RQ2: What motivating factors contribute to retired African American senior military officers' public service career choices after military retirement?

Chapter 4 includes data collected from participants who met inclusion criteria for the study, the research setting, and a description of methods used for data analysis. Evidence of data trustworthiness is also presented. I then provide context for the study's results by describing personal and military-related demographics of participants. Next, I present study findings, detailing how data were used to address each research question. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary and transition to Chapter 5, which includes implications of findings, recommendations, potential future research directions, and conclusions.

Research Setting

Following IRB approval (#12-22-22-0151273, awarded on December 22, 2022), I contacted Facebook group administrators and asked permission to post the recruitment flier (see Appendix D) on their pages as described in Chapter 3. Once permission was granted, the recruitment flier was posted to the following Facebook groups using my personal Facebook page: Virginia Loves Veterans, the Roaming Vet, FSU Military Veterans/ROTC, and Anne Arundel County military and veterans.

I received responses from potential participants within 1 week of my initial post. When potential participants indicated their interest in the study, I contacted them and verified they met inclusion criteria. After verification was obtained, informed consent forms were emailed and within approximately 36 hours, participants acknowledged they received and reviewed these forms (see Appendix E). Interviews were immediately scheduled using my Walden University official email and Zoom account.

Demographics

To participate in the study, all participants were required to acknowledge parameters of the study by signing an informed consent form sent to them by email (see Appendix E). In addition to this, participants were required to be African American, retired from the U.S. military at the O-5 level or higher, and must have transitioned to working in the federal government as civilian employees after their retirement from the military.

Participant demographic profiles are shown in Table 2. To protect participant confidentiality, all participants were identified using pseudonyms. Personal and military-

related demographic profiles of participants are shown in Table 2 and Table 3,

respectively.

Table 2

Personal Demographic Profiles of Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Number of Children	State
P1	Male	63	Married	2	Maryland
P2	Male	64	Married	4	Virginia
P3	Male	59	Married	2	Maryland
P4	Male	59	Single	0	Virginia
P5	Male	54	Married	1	District of Columbia
P6	Male	71	Married	3	Maryland
P7	Male	59	Married	3	Maryland
P8	Female	N/A	Single	0	Virginia
P9	Male	58	Married	3	Maryland
P10	Male	57	Single	2	Virginia
P11	Male	56	Single	2	Virginia
P12	Female	60	Married	5	Virginia
P13	Male	58	Married	2	Virginia
P14	Female	57	Single	0	Virginia
P15	Male	70	Married	5	Virginia
P16	Male	53	Married	5	Virginia

All participants had retired from the military and transitioned into the federal

workforce as civilian employees at the time of interviews. Participants were located in

Maryland (31.25%), Virginia (56.25%) or the District of Columbia (12.5%). Participants

ranged in age from 53 to 71, with the average 59.9 years old. In comparison, the average

age of individuals in the SES is 54.6 years old (OPM, 2020). Three participants (18.75%)

were female, and 13 participants were male. According to the OPM (2020), 33.3% of the

SES is female. Thus, demographics of participants in this study were similar to the SES,

with the sample slightly underrepresenting females and overrepresenting males. Military-related demographic characteristics of participants are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Participants' Military Career Demographics

Participant	Branch	Years in Service	Rank at Retirement	Retired From Military	Years in Federal Workforce
P1	Army	31	O-6	2014	3
P2	Air Force	30	O-6	2005	12
P3	Army	30	O-5	2014	9
P4	Air Force	32	O-7	2019	4
P5	Army	24	O-5	2016	3
P6	Air Force	24	O-6	2018	3
P7	Army	25	O-5	2013	6
P8	Army	25	O-6	2009	12
P9	Army	20	O-5	2007	15
P10	Army	20	O-5	2013	9
P11	Army	23	O-5	2014	9
P12	Air Force	25	O-6	2018	3
P13	Army	22	O-5	2008	12
P14	Air Force	29	O-5	2007	15
P15	Air Force	33	O-6	2005	18
P16	Army	27	O-5	2008	14

All participants had retired from either the Army (62.5%) or the Air Force (37.5%). Participants had the following ranks: LTC (O-5, nine participants), Colonel (O-6, six participants) and Brigadier General (O-7, one participant). On average, participants served in the military for 26.25 years. Four participants began working in the federal government as civilian employees immediately after their retirement from the military (P3, P4, P11, and P15). Seven participants waited 1 to 2 years before transitioning to

civilian work (P6, P8, P9, P10, P12, P14, and P16), whereas five participants transitioned to the federal workforce 3 or more years after their military retirement (P1, P2, P5, P7, and P13). Participants had on average 9.1 years of experience working for the federal government as civilians. Thus, they had vast military knowledge due to at least 3 years of service in the federal government as civilian employees. This suggests that participants could be considered experts regarding military retirement and transition to employment within the federal government as civilian employees and not contractors.

Data Collection

Data collection began upon receipt of IRB approval from Walden University on December 22, 2022. Social media invitations were posted to Facebook Groups on December 26, 2022. Sixteen one-hour interviews were scheduled using my Walden University email address. All participants completed the interviews, with no attrition. All interviews were conducted virtually using the Zoom telecommunication software. Participants were instructed not to reveal any personal information beyond what was asked in the approved interview protocol. Any personal information shared in the interviews was redacted. Participants were assigned a participant ID number for data identification purposes, as well as to protect their confidentiality throughout the study.

Prior to the start of each interview, I reviewed the informed consent form with each participant. See Appendix E. The participant acknowledged verbally that they consented to have their data utilized in the study. To transcribe the data, I used the transcription capabilities of Otter.ai. I reviewed the transcriptions line-by-line while comparing them to the original audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of the

transcriptions. After the transcriptions were completed, I sent each participant their interview transcript for interviewee transcript review (see Rowlands, 2021). Eight participants responded to the interviewee transcript review email indicating that no changes to the transcript were needed. The remaining eight participants did not respond to the transcript review email.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

Blanco and Rossman (2021)'s approach to data analysis was used in this study. Briefly, the data analytic process consisted of seven phases: (a) organizing the data; (b) immersing the researcher in the data; (c) generating ideas for case summaries and possible themes; (d) coding the data (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos and connecting the data to previous literature and to the theoretical framework chosen for the study; (f) searching for alternative understandings of the data; and (g) writing the formal presentation of the study

To begin data analysis, the verbatim transcriptions were uploaded to the NVivo software for analysis and coded by themes to determine the similarity and differences in the participants' responses. I conducted the research protocol and methodology for data analysis as described in Chapter 3, with the following additional details. I did four critical readings of each interview transcript. In the first reading, I read each transcript for overall impressions. In the second reading, I reviewed each transcript line-by-line to refamiliarize myself with the data. Third, I read the interview transcripts by reviewing each response to interview question one, then interview question two, until all interview questions had been exhausted. This allowed the identification of important themes, and

trends that emerged from each interview question. It also allowed me to identify which interview questions could be grouped into common themes. Lastly, on a fourth reading, I reread the interview transcripts to regain a holistic appreciation of the entire data set.

I next reviewed the interview transcripts to determine if the data correlated to the research questions. All interview questions were answered by each participant and there was no need to eliminate any data or collect further data due to saturation and data richness. I began coding with *a priori* codes derived from the study's theoretical framework, PSM. Table 4 contains a list of the *a priori* codes used in this study.

Table 4

A Priori Codes Used in This Study

Code ID	Code Description
Care	The capacity to sense other people's suffering (Wang et al., 2020).
Fairness	Acknowledges generosity, encourages reciprocity, and prevents unfair defection (Wang et al., 2020).
Authority	Values social hierarchy's perception of legitimacy and appeal and acknowledges rank and the responsibility for subordinates to conform (Wang et al., 2020).
Loyalty	Encourages sacrifice for the in-group and watchfulness for the out-group (Wang et al., 2020).
Sanctity	Attempting to live in a higher, less sensual, more noble manner (Haidt, 2012).
Intrinsic motivation	The pursuit of an activity as its own end, rather than an ends to a mean (Deci & Ryan, 1985).
Extrinsic drive	The pursuit of an activity because it leads to a favorable outcome (Deci & Ryan, 1985).
Moral duty	The pursuit of an activity because the individual deems it to be morally necessary and correct (Collins, 2019).

These codes became the major themes that emerged from data analysis. Specifically, care, fairness, authority, loyalty and sanctity address RQ1, whereas intrinsic motivation, extrinsic drive and moral duty address RQ2. These themes will be discussed in the results and findings section of this chapter.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research involves ensuring that the research findings are dependable, reliable and valid. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the importance of four factors in ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. I implemented several strategies in addition to those discussed in Chapter 3 to establish the credibility of the study. First, I employed interviewee transcript review, which increases the authenticity of the final transcript (see Rowlands, 2021). To this end, I emailed the interview transcripts to participants to allow them the opportunity to correct any errors, clarify erroneous information or provide additional information. Second, I created a comprehensive codework that details all of the responses of the participants, as coded in the data analysis process. See Appendix F. The codebook also allows readers to derive their own conclusions based on the participants' words. Third, I included verbatim quotations from the participants in the final analysis of the data. Fourth, I used reflexivity protocols during the research process to account for my own

biases and perceptions. Specifically, I took field notes and memos during the research interviews and while I was reading and analyzing the data.

Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of qualitative research can be transferred to other settings or populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I promoted transferability in this study by using robust, think descriptions of the data. I also collected detailed demographic information about the participants regarding their personal characteristics (see Table 2) and their military career profiles (see Table 3). The inclusion criteria of the study ensured that the participants were knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation, namely why African Americans are underrepresented in the SES. The sample achieved sufficiency, which was evidenced by reaching data saturation after 16 interviews. The participants from the target population accurately represented the diversity present in the SES. Therefore, transferability of this study was established by describing the data in a way that it could be compared to African Americans in other branches of service who could also describe their lived experiences with public service motivation.

Dependability

Qualitative research is said to be dependable if the same results are generated if the research is conducted multiple times. Dependability was promoted in this study using the mechanisms. First, I created an audit trail, documenting every aspect of the research process. Second, I used an interview protocol to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions in the same order. See Appendix G for a copy of the study's interview

protocol. Third, dependability is promoted by clearly documenting the data collection and analysis procedures, noting any changes to the procedures outlined in Chapter 3. Fourth, the codebook documents all findings for each participant (Appendix F).

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research involves ensuring that the findings of the study result from the participants' experiences, not the researchers. To ensure confirmability, I engaged in extensive reflexivity protocols during the research process. I used bracketing procedures prior to conducting interviews. I also took field notes during the interviews to preserve my perceptions about the participants' responses. Confirmability is also promoted using verbatim quotations from the participants to accurately capture their thoughts, perceptions and lived experiences.

Participants

In this section, I present a description of the participants. Understanding the participants' backgrounds is essential to phenomenology (Nigar, 2020). Understanding the participants' worlds provides necessary context for understanding their lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, in this section, I present the participants, who have been given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. In some descriptions, the participants' specific job roles have been generalized so they cannot be reasonably identified.

P1

P1 was an African American male who retired from the Army at a rank of O-6 after serving in the military for 31 years. After his retirement in 2014, P1 took a position

took a position as the chief of education and training support at a military base in Virginia. P1 is passionate about education for military servicemen and servicewomen and speaks highly of his ROTC scholarship he received in college. P1 believes that one skill that can help African Americans succeed in the SES is networking. P1 said, "African Americans have hit a ceiling in public service because of networking. That's crucial. It's critical to know individuals throughout the organization and outside the organization, in different agencies."

P2

P2 was an African American male who retired from the Air Force at a rank of O-6 after serving in the military for 30 years. P2 took a six-year hiatus between his retirement from the military in 2005 and his commencement of public service in 2011. P2 works for the U.S. Department of Education of Federal Student aid in a management position. P2 views his role in public service as furthering his commitment to the American people. P2 said, "I like the opportunity to add value and make a difference for the American people."

P3

P3 was an African American male who retired from the Army at a rank of O-5 after 30 years of military service. P3 immediately transitioned from the military to the public sector upon their retirement in 2014, working as a program analyst at the Department of Homeland Security. P3 describes their goal after retirement to be to "just travel and spend time with wife and see the world. I think I'm never going to escape government service. I'm learning that you can be a digital nomad and fulfill a task form halfway around the world."

P4

P4 was an African American male who retired from the Air Force after 32 years of service. P4 is the highest ranked individual represented in this study, as he retired at a rank of O-7. P4 transitioned to working for the Department of Defense in 2019 and works under the purview of the Department of the Air Force in a management position. After he retires from public service, P4 describes, "I'm going go to school. I want to explore education as an option. Maybe I'll go get a Ph.D."

P5

P5 was an African American male who retired from the Army at a rank of O-6 after 24 years of service. P5 took a four-year hiatus between his retirement in 2016 and entering the public sector in 2020. He works in intelligence as a telecommunications specialist. P5 describes his choice of the public sector over the private sector saying, "I just wasn't comfortable as a contractor with contract change overs. I wanted stability."

P6

P6 was an African American male who served for 25 years in the Air Force before retiring at a rank of O-6. P6 took three years off in between his retirement from the military and his work in the public sector. P6 works as a financial officer at the Veterans Benefits Association and is deeply committed to ensuring that all veterans have the benefits they deserve.

P7

P7 was an African American male who served for 27 years in the U.S. Army. He retired at a rank of O-6 in 2009 and immediately transitioned to working in the public

sector. He currently works for the Department of Defense as a logistics management specialist and supervisor. P7 is passionate about providing for his family's educational pursuits. P7 said, "I don't want [my children] to have college loan bills, because I think it's a biggest rip-off and a disadvantage to these. I told him both when they were kids, 'Hey, y'all stand on my shoulders. Stay on as long as you need to. And once you get going' I don't want you looking back' I don't want you to second guess yourself.'"

P8

P8 was an African American female who served for 25 years in the U.S. Army. She retired at a rank of O-6 in 2009 and transitioned to public service in 2010. She works for the Department of Defense as a program analyst. P8 described her role as an African American female in public service, saying "Whether it's wisdom or experience, I think we all lean towards the underdog' I don't think that I'm different from everyone else. I just get the opportunity to express my thoughts and I'm thankful for that."

P9

P9 was an African American male who served for 20 years in the U.S. Army, retiring at a rank of O-5. After his retirement in 2007, he spent one year working as a contractor before transitioning to public service. He works at the Pentagon under the purview of the Department of the Army. He continued service to the Army in the public sector because "The vast majority of our retired military individuals. There's a core of shared experiences that you've gone through, even though you may not have gone through them together. We're indebted to each other."

P10

P10 was an African American male who served in the U.S. Army for 20 years. He retired at a rank of O-5 in 2013 and transitioned to public service in 2014. He works for the Department of Defense in a leadership position in cybersecurity. He describes his motivation to public service saying, "I think the biggest thing coming from the military back to public service was really the security. It's the security of the job and that my skills easily transferred back over into public sector."

P11

P11 was an African American male who served in the U.S. Army for 23 years before retiring in 2013 at a rank of O-5. P11 took a six-year break in between his retirement from the military and his entry into public service. He works for the U.S. Army Security Command in a leadership position. After retirement, he plans to "write a book about all of my crazy experiences in the military."

P12

P12 was an African American female who served for 25 years in the Air Force. She retired at a rank of O-6 and transitioned into public service, where she works as a professor at military academy. She enjoys her employment as a professor, describing "There's more opportunities out there under the educational umbrella. Not only teaching, but from curriculum development. I have a great interest in curriculum development."

P13

P13 was an African American male who retired from the Army after 22 years of service. P13 retired at a rank of O-5 and works as a budget office for the Department of

Transportation. He describes his motivation for public service, saying "And over time, my motivation has been to show the junior officers how I can help them. I enjoy mentoring and teaching the next generation of officers."

P14

P14 was an African American female who served for 29 years in the Air Force. She retired at a rank of O-5 and works for the Department of Defense. She's going to continue her commitment to public service after she retires. She said, "I'm going to retire and spread my wings and see how I can help local and state governments move forward and have some fun."

P15

P15 was an African American male who served for 33 years in the U.S. Air Force before retiring at a rank of O-6. He immediately transitioned from the military to working in the federal government at FDIC in a leadership position. He describes a deep commitment for working in the public sector, saying, "I think I'm going to be that old guy who doesn't retire. I'll still be working when I'm 90 trying to make Americans' lives better."

P16

P16 was an African American male who served in the U.S. Army for 27 years before retiring at a rank of O-5. P16 works as the director of operations at a prominent military base. P16 enjoys the job security that comes with working in the public sector. P16 describes, "One thing about working in the public sector is that once you become

tenured at three years, it's job security. I'm comfortable with job security and I'm

comfortable continuing to serve my country."

Results and Findings

The results section is separated into two subsections according to research

question. In the first subsection, I analyze the perceptions of retired African American

senior military officers about public service in the federal government as civilian

employees as a second career choice after retirement from the military.. Five themes were

used to address RQ1: (a) authority, (b) care, (c) fairness, (d) loyal and (e) sanctity. In the

second subsection, I analyze the motivations of the participants for a second career in

public service. Three themes were used to address RQ2: (a) intrinsic motivation, (b)

extrinsic drive and (c) moral duty. Together, these themes address the overarching

research problem, which concerns the underrepresentation of African Americans in

public service and in the SES.

Research Question 1

Throughout interviews, participants were asked about their perceptions regarding

public service in the federal government as civilian employees. The participants were

also asked why they chose the public sector rather than becoming contractors in the

private sector. There were five main themes that resulted from this analysis: (a) authority,

(b) care, (c) fairness, (d) loyalty and (e) sanctity (see Table 5).

Table 5

Participants' Perceptions of Public Service

Theme	Participants	Excerpt
Authority	P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P12, P13, P14, P16	"Leadership really motivates me and the fact that I have some great people working under me as a team. Everyone has inner office issues, but to me, I couldn't have asked for a better team. I felt that they're all all-stars in their own separate ways. It really motivates me when I get a chance to work with my team and invest in their success" (Graham).
Care	P2, P3, P4, P6, P8, P10, P15	"What I decided worked for me was I like taking care of Airmen. That's really what our job is supposed to do. We're supposed to organize training, equip our troops, and look after their family needs. I am right there in the thick of things being able to affect difference and change for them. Knowing that I am doing something that's enabling airmen to take care of their mission is probably what I like most about the job" (P4).
Fairness	P1, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10	"I like that my employees hold me accountable, while I am holding them accountable. I think, most importantly, I like the fact that I can show people that or empower people to achieve their greatest and realize their greatest potential" (P8).
Loyalty	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P12, P14	"What I like most is that the Defense POW MIA accounting agency has a mission of trying to recover the remains of those lost in battles and conflict. Since World War II, when you can see the look on a family member face, when you can return their loved ones remains. They have a sense of closure. Being able to support the agency in that process of researching, discovery, identifying and eventually returning the remains back to a family member, there's no greater feeling. It really does speak to the fact that when we say no one is left behind, the government and DOD is still investing resources in making sure that they can find everyone that has gone into harm's way" (P3).

Sanctity	P1, P3, P5, P6, P13, P14, P15, P16	"I like helping people. In my position, in order to ensure our mission runs, our mission is 24/7. It's all the time: non-stop. However, you must have the right people in the right position, and you have to support for it to run well. And I've spent the last 30 years of my life helping. And that's one thing I love about this job. I love to help people, including junior peers and some senior ones as well" (P14).

Theme 1: Authority

In this section, I discuss the participants views on authority and leadership. This section is divided into two subsections. First, the participants' views regarding their own leadership are discussed. Second, I address the participants' perceptions of leadership in the public sector, in general.

Valuing Authority. In the context of public service motivation, authority is valuing social and professional hierarchy. Individuals valuing authority acknowledges rank and the embrace the responsibility of leading subordinates (Wang et al., 2020). Ten of the participants (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P12, P13, P14, and P16) spoke about authority in their interviews. Many of the participants viewed their roles in public service as one of authority. As shown in Table 1, P7 valued their role as a leader and enjoyed investing in the success of their team. P1 also valued their role as a leader, saying:

What I like best about my job is the training aspect, preparing people to go out and serve in support of our nation and in defense of our nation. In a global environment, our defense attaché offices are a position throughout the world in over 100 countries. They go out as soldiers, diplomats or military diplomats,

military officers, noncommissioned officers, Department of Defense, civilians,

and spouses. They go and represent us around the world. That's important to me.

P1 valued their role as a leader in public service, noting that their actions as a leader directly influences the actions of others serving the country.

Other participants discussed their leadership values, describing leadership and mentorship as motivators for a career in public service. For instance, P8 said, "One of the things I like about [my job] is the level of authority, influence, and motivation I have on other people. I like being able to shape the workforce for future years." P8 believes that their work as a leader may not catalyze an immediate change, but will have a lasting effect on their team, which is valuable to them. P2 said:

> I want to build m' own team. I'll be a senior associate, a principal, a vice
>
> president. I want to be a leader and influence my team. It's a carryover from the
>
> military perspective where you must keep moving up. If you're not moving up,
>
> you're not leading effectively.

Thus, for many of the participants, leadership is a motivating factor for their second career in the public sector.

Lack of Authority in the Public Sector. Some of the participants noted that, in some areas of the public sector, leadership and authority were lacking. For example, P1 noted that one thing they don't like about public service is that some leaders don't hold their subordinates accountable or allow them teaching or learning opportunities. P1 said:

> I was in a meeting with an SES Senior Executive Service official and another GS-
>
> 15. And they both stated that they didn't like giving a hard task to subordinates.

They harbor those tasks and execute them themselves well, but they're not

allowing their team the opportunity to go out and make those errors early in their

careers. Then, they have that knowledge base where they face something similar.

That's the most frustrating thing that I see. Not allowing and not preparing and

training the subordinates and junior officers.

P13 also views leadership as lacking in some areas of the public sector. P13 said,

"Sometimes the public sector can be disheartening. There's a disproportionate number of

people who should be performing at a higher level. That's not their failure. It's a

leadership failure." Thus, these participants view the leadership in the public sector as

lacking, which serves as a motivation for them to be strong, effective leaders.

The lack of leadership quality in the public sector was highlighted by other

participants. For instance, P8 said:

What I dislike is the notion of not holding people accountable for their work at

their grade. The is a very standard grade structure within DOD that is unilaterally

expected throughout the federal government. If an individual is in grade 12 or 13,

there are expectations of a specific skill set. People are not always working to

those expectations. It's not that they necessarily can't. Some can't, some can and

choose not to because they must be nudged. Some are not necessarily empowered

or held accountable to do so.

Thus, according to the participants, leadership can sometimes be lacking in their public

sector. The participants cited lack of leadership as a motivating factor in their continued

employment for the government. For example, P14 said:

One of the 'things that I'm truly disappointed in is how leadership fails to stand

up for itself, but most importantly, stand up for personnel. One of the things I

believe in is that you as a leader, you must have the courage of your conviction

and you must be willing to speak truth to power. That is not how everyone

approaches leadership. I truly believe that many of the leaders that we have in our

organization should never have been promoted. They had neither time,

experience, knowledge, skills nor ability to be leader. They made it because they

were friends with someone. I'm driven to be a better leader so I can show others

what leadership truly is.

P14 highlighted the concept of nepotism, where those in power promote or appoint their

friends to positions for which they are not necessarily qualified. Notably, nepotism is a

prevalent practice in the government and public sector (Chassamboulli & Gomes, 2021).

The concept of nepotism will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Theme 2: Care

The second theme revealed by the participants was care. In the context of public

service motivation, care is the capacity to sense other people's suffering (Wang et al.,

2020). Many participants sought employment in the public sector because they cared

about their communities and those suffering. For example, P15 said, "I took this job

because I wanting to help people. In the military and now, I've always wanted to help

those in pain." P15 views their role in public service as that of a caretaker, caring for their

community-at-large. These perceptions are similar to those P4, who described their role

as taking care of Airmen and their families (see Table 5). P4's mission was to ease the

suffering of Air Force members and their families, a mission they took seriously. Thus, for these participants, caring for their communities, the military community and the country was a driving force for their public service.

Some participants expressed the value of caring for their subordinates. For example, P10 said, "The best thing I like about [my job] is that I get to work around people. I get to build organizations. I get to build teams. I get to take people under my wing and truly care about them." P10 values the opportunity to care about their subordinates and enhance the quality of their lives and employment, an essential component of leadership and public service. Similarly, P2 said:

> I make sure my people are really dedicated to doing the right thing. They are
>
> negating the notion that federal employees are lazy and do not add value for
>
> taxpayers' dollars. I've found that if you really invest in caring about people's
>
> successes, then they'll step up to the plate and deliver. I have been impressed by
>
> the professionalism of people that are doing the real business of the organization.

Thus, this theme interests with the theme of authority. One of the important aspects of the participants' leadership roles is that of caring for their employees as people and investing in their successes.

Other participants highlighted the importance of caring for others. For example, P5 said:

> I value things I can do for my family and being able to still have some type of
>
> influence in my community. I'm part of a share ministry that provides food to the
>
> local community and our church members. I really enjoyed doing that. Being able

to add some type of impact on that is encouraging to me. I work to have the

flexibility and the income to still add value to my community.

For P5, their employment in the public sector is not only fulfilling personally, but also

fulfilling in enabling them the flexibility and the means to give back to their community.

Along the same lines, 14 of the participants said that they would volunteer in their

communities when they decided to fully retire from the public sector. These findings

highlight the notion that individuals devoted to public service are also devoted to caring

for their families, employees, and communities.

Theme 3: Fairness

Fairness was the third theme highlighted by the participants regarding their public

service motivation. In the context of public service, fairness is acknowledging generosity,

encouraging reciprocity, and preventing unfair defection (Wang et al., 2020). This theme

also intersects with the theme of authority, as many participants highlighted that their role

as leaders was to be fair and equitable. For example, P7 said:

I think my biggest reward is working with younger logisticians and helping

develop them. I like to stretch them a little bit beyond their comfort zone, to get

them into a holistic approach, as they look at solving logistics issues. I teach them

to tackle problems, not just to the blinders on. Teaching, coaching and mentoring

is probably my favorite part of it. I don't like the fact that you have nepotism and

the good old boy system. It's unfair to the individuals who are trying to get in

through the right way and compete for positions.

P7 values their role as a leader because they're able to influence the younger generation of employees. However, they note that public service is not always equitable, and that nepotism can sometimes negate the fairness aspect of public service.

Other participants view their leadership role as imparting fairness onto employees. For example, P1 said:

I dislike leaders who fail to train their personnel. We must place junior officers in positions where they can make errors and bounce back when you don't allow the subordinates to have hard tasks, you're doing a disservice to them. Given them some guidance for task conditions and standards, and then let them go. Make minor corrections as needed. This way you're being fair to junior officers regarding their careers. When they make it to the senior ranks, they've learned and know how to respond to errors.

P1 described fairness in terms of allowing subordinates and junior officers to fail. P1 acknowledged that failure is a natural part of learning, that no mission will be without errors. Thus, for P1, fairness involves leading subordinates in a way that allows them to learn from their mistakes, so they can better cope with inevitable mistakes later in their careers. P8 also described their role as promoting fairness, through accountability, and said, "I like that my employees hold me accountable, while I am holding them accountable. I think, most importantly, I like the fact that I can show people that or empower people to achieve their greatest and realize their greatest potential." Notably, P8 described fairness in terms of reciprocity. Not only did they hold their employees accountable as a leader, but their employees also held them accountable. Thus, fairness

involves reciprocity in leadership, while allowing employees to make and learn from mistakes.

Theme 4: Loyalty

Participants expressed loyalty to different institutions. Some participants described their motivation for public service in terms of loyalty to the U.S. and its missions. For example, P14 said:

> In no small way, the most powerful and impactful country in the world is the United States. Our country is still the world's only superpower. Because of that, I take what I do very seriously. That's a big motivating factor for me. I look around and I see what's going on in Ukraine. I look at Iran and what could happen there. When I look globally, I think that we need serious people who understand what we do and why we do it. That motivates me.

P14 described their motivation for their job, and the pleasure they derive from their employment, in terms of loyalty to the United States. Their belief in the United States' global missions empowers them to thrive in public service. P3, who worked for Defense POW MIA, also described their drive for private service in terms of loyalty to both the United States and its military. P3 said:

> I do what I do because it's unacceptable to leave one of our fallen military servicemen or servicewomen behind. All soldiers who gave their lives for this great country should be brough home, honored and respected. I do what I do because I am loyal to their sacrifice.

P3 not only described their loyalty to the U.S., but also to its ideals. Just as fallen soldiers devoted their lives to service for the country, P3 devoted their life to upholding the "No Man Left Behind" ideal of the United States military.

Participants also discussed loyalty to those employees working under them. For example, P4 said:

The individuals that I work with are all highly motivated individuals. They understand the value that we bring to the table and what we're trying to accomplish. That makes a big difference. What I value about the role is that I get to work with some amazing people who are all loyal to the mission. It makes it easy to be loyal to them.

This theme, therefore, also intersects with the theme of authority, as P4 describes a loyalty to their subordinates. They view their role as a leader in terms of being loyal to their team and subordinates, a value instilled by the U.S. military. P4 said loyalty to their team and to their country is a motivating factor for public, as opposed to private service:

At the end of the day, we all know that we are doing something much bigger than any individual. It takes the team to accomplish big goals. I sometimes felt in the private sector where I was out there by myself, it was a win or fail. I've found out that, even as O7, whether you have successes or failures, it was the team that was in it together.

Thus, according to the participants' responses, loyalty to their teams is a motivating factor for service in the public sector.

Other participants describe their path to service in terms of loyalty to the military community. For example, P6 said:

Loyalty is what took me to the Veterans Administration. Coming full circle, being a veteran receiving benefits and now helping other veterans through my skill set is what I bring to the table to help them get the benefits that they deserve.

P6 highlighted the intersection of loyalty, care and compassion. They described their motivation in terms of loyalty, but in serving veterans who aren't receiving the proper benefits, they're also demonstrating their care for that population. P8 also described their employment in public service in terms of both loyalty and care. P8 said:

My primary reason for working there is that the government has invested in me all these years through the military. Going forward, I have the ability and I'm in a place where I can make a difference. The government invested in me, which means the American people invested their tax dollars. I want to give back for that sacrifice.

These findings indicate that loyalty comes in many varieties. The participants described loyalty to their country, the military, their employees, and their ideals. Notably, the participants also describe using their authority in conjunction with loyalty, using their positions as leaders to demonstrate and promote their loyalty to their respective ideals.

Theme 5: Sanctity

The final theme elucidated by the participants was that of sanctity. In the context of public service motivation, sanctity is attempting to live in a higher, less sensual, more

noble manner (Haidt, 2012). Consistent with this idea, many participants highlighted their commitment to the greater good. For example, P14 said:

> The one thing I like best about my job is my service to my country. As corny as that sounds, I believe that is what drives most of us who are in federal service. Most of us can leave federal service and work outside of the current employee realm as contractors and make more money. However, we stay where we are because we truly believe in what we do for the country. That is what has motivated me from day one.

P14 holds service to their country in the highest regard, demonstrating sanctity in wanting to devote their time and skills to the greater good. Similarly, P15 said, "I want to help people. I want to make people's lives better. I couldn't do that in the private sector." Thus, for some of the participants, the value the good they do for society and for their communities.

Other participants also expressed wanting to be in service to others, highlighting the sanctity of their decisions for public service. For example, P3 said:

> In the public sector, you still get a chance to move like we did when we were in the military. You still have that same sense o' purpose' It's not it's not about the financial gains. It really is more about the ability to serve the public and still meet the meet the mission of Department of Defense.

P3 described being purpose- and mission-oriented. They viewed their role in public service as being in service to others and to a greater mission, like their mission in the military. P3 said, "I can set up databases or procure equipment that to help our

researchers or doctors, historians be able to do their mission. Helping others succeed in their mission is success to me." P3, therefore, viewed their success in terms of the success of others, as well as the success of the mission. P16 expressed the same sentiments and said, "I had a mission in the military. I wanted a mission in life. Public service gave me that mission. I'm honored to help people every day." Thus, according to participants, service to the greater good is a major motivating factor for their continued employment in public service.

As noted previously, 14 participants reported that they would volunteer after they retire from public service. This finding also highlights the sanctity demonstrated by the participants. For example, P5 said:

> I wanted to be some place where I felt like I would add benefit. I think I am doing that where I'm at right now. After I retire, I think I might volunteer. I want to help people, just out of goodness of my heart. That's it.

P5's statement is representative of all participants. The 14 participants who indicated they would volunteer all describing wanting to give back to their communities and further the mission of helping those in need after their retirement. These findings indicate that individuals who devote their lives to the military and to public service hold sanctity in high regard.

Summary of RQ1

Five themes were revealed by analysis of the data related to RQ1. Those five themes were: (a) authority, (b) care, (c) fairness, (d)Loyalty and (e) sanctity. The participants valued their authority as leaders and genuinely invested their efforts in

promoting the efforts of those who worked under them. However, many participants noted that leadership was, in general, lacking from the public sector. Care was another essential theme highlighted by the participants. The participants described caring for their families, employees, and communities as an important facet in their public service motivation. Notably, almost all participants will extend their care to their communities by volunteering when they retire.

Different facets of fairness were discussed by the participants. Many participants viewed their role as leaders as promoting fairness for their employees, which involved promoting a learning environment where employees and subordinates have the autonomy to manage their own projects, make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. Other participants highlighted the unfairness of nepotism that is sometimes present in the public sector. Loyalty was also a major motivating factor for the participants. They described their public service motivation in terms of loyalty to the United States, the U.S. military, their communities, and their ideals. Finally, the participants highlighted the importance of sanctity. Many of them described their commitment to upholding the greater good and helping those in need. Some cited their military service, and subsequent service in the public sector, as a desire to uphold the ideals and mission of the country. Based on the participants' responses, these findings collectively indicate that African American retired senior military members desire second careers in public service based on the principles of authority, care, fairness, loyalty, and sanctity.

Research Question 2

In this section, I describe the participants' motivations for public service. Three main themes were derived from the analysis of the participants' interviews: (a) intrinsic motivation, (b) extrinsic drive, and (c) moral duty (see Table 6).

Table 6

Participants' Motivation for Public Service

Theme	Participants	Excerpt
Intrinsic motivation	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P13, P15, P16	"I took a $30,000 pay cut to take the position where I am. I got to the point where I realized you only have to have certain things that you need to be able to have or pay for. I took my position because of happiness and serenity. I wanted to feel like I'm adding value, which is more important to me than the $30,000 pay gap" (P2).
Extrinsic drive	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P16	"I like the security of the employment. I like the flexibility of being able to move around the country, because we have different locations that I can work. I would say the security and the fact that I know that I'm going to get a retirement check when I talk about that security at the end" (P10).
Moral duty	P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P10, P15, P16	"I am motivated to give service back to the country that I was born in. The United States has given me everything. I understand service. It's a selfless job. It's not one where I'm looking for personal gain" (P16).

Theme 1: Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation was the first theme elucidated by the participants regarding their motivation for public service. Intrinsic motivation, as defined by Deci and Ryan (1985), is the pursuit of an activity as its own end, rather than as a means to an end. P1 described their intrinsic motivation as an enthusiasm for their mission:

> It was just the missions. I've pretty much enjoyed every mission I've had, whether it's in uniform or in civilian status. Salary was not a consideration. When I jump up in the morning, I'm ready to go, I love the mission, and I want to go attack the pressing tasks for the day. I embrace the ad hoc tasks that pop up. I burn the midnight oil and work late at night at times, but I don't complain, because I love the mission.

P1 was internally motivated by the success of their missions. They value their success because they value the mission. Similarly, P4 said, "I'm self-driven. I want to make sure that we're doing the best that we can for our reserve citizen airmen. That's more important to me than anything else." Therefore, based on participant responses, an essential motivating factor for employment in public service is intrinsic motivation derived from a commitment to their missions.

Many participants acknowledged that salary was not a motivator for them in seeking public service employment. For example, P2 described taking a $30,000 reduction in salary to work in their current position. However, P2 viewed their employment as important and places value in being able to add benefit to their mission.

P15 also describes taking a reduction in compensation for their current employment. P15 said:

> Salary was not a consideration. When I first started seeking positions, what I was offered, and what I was making in the Air Force at the time was approximately $20,000 more. Money never was a major factor. I could always make money in the private sector, but the private sector doesn't have the same commitment to the mission.

Thus, a major motivating factor for many of the participants in the mission itself. They expressed satisfaction with their choice of employment in the public sector because they can extend their commitment to the country and its missions.

Other participants described their internal motivation for public service employment in terms of job satisfaction. The participants derived satisfaction from their current work. For example, P5 said:

> To me, it's about personal satisfaction and enjoying a job. I've seen too many people who chased $1 and are still not satisfied. After doing 24 years in the military, I was not about to be uncomfortable and unsatisfied at all regardless of the dollar amount. I knew I wanted to continue serving in some manner. That gives me satisfaction.

P5 derived satisfaction from the pursuit of meaningful missions. P8 also described satisfaction as a motivating factor. P8 said, "I was satisfied in my work in the military. I loved serving. I had more to give, and I wanted to find a way to continue serving. The public sector gives me that satisfaction." Thus, some participants derive satisfaction from

their work in the public sector because they're able to continue working on missions important to them.

Another facet of intrinsic motivation for public service is continued personal and professional growth. Some participants described being motivated by their continued development. For example, P6 said:

> I really the numerous ways in which we can learn, continue to learn, and continue to grow. For most different issues and projects that come up on any given day, it's always 'something new. I'm learning something every single day. That's important to me.

P6 was motivated to work in public service because it offered them the opportunity for continued growth as a professional. They describe being able to constantly learn new things, which reignites their passion for their work. P13 expressed similar thoughts and said, "I'm a really inquisitive person. The government allows me to continue growing my skills. It's fulfilling." Thus, according to participants' responses, intrinsic motivation encompasses continued learning and professional development.

Theme 2: Extrinsic Drive

The second theme highlighted by the participants regarding their motivation for public service was external drive. Extrinsic drive is the pursuit of an activity because it leads to a favorable outcome (Deci & Ryan, 1985). As discussed in the previous section, salary and financial compensation was not a motivating factor for the participants. In fact, many participants, including P2 and P15, took a reduction in pay in their current employment positions. However, many participants cited job security as an extrinsic

motivating factor for their choice to pursue public service employment. For example, P10 said:

> I like the security of the employment. Salary wasn't one of my top priorities. One of my top priorities was looking for job security. That stability after being 20 years in the military was important, knowing that I could plan around a certain income 'and that it wasn't going to change.

Thus, P10 described job security as a motivating factor in their public service employment.

Other participants also highlighted the importance of job security, especially compared to the private sector or contracting. P11 compared the public and private sectors and said:

> One of the key things for the public sector is the security. When I was a contractor, I worked a job for maybe three years, and then suddenly, they didn't get as much for the contract. So, he started laying off people and then I just went to different contracting jobs. That's frustrating because you don't know how long the contract lasts .

One major difference between the public and private sectors, as highlighted by the participants, is job security. The private sector has notably less job security than the public sector (Georgellis & Tabvuma, 2010). P16 also compared the public and private sectors, and said, "Job security is much more stable, and much more dependable as opposed to work in the private sector. I've had some friends that had been very successful

in the private sector, but that takes a lot of a lot of work and strife." P4 also described job

security as being more important than salary:

> Being a GS-15, in the National Capital Region, I feel like I'm being well
>
> compensated. I may not be as well compensated as people working in the private
>
> sector, but the whole benefits package is lacking in the private sector. I know
>
> people who are contractors who make a boatload of money, but when it comes to
>
> the entitlement and benefits aspects of employment, they're lacking. Job security
>
> is also lacking in the private sector.

These findings suggest that job security is an important motivating factor for individuals

working in the public sector. The participants noted that they have more flexibility and

security with their employment in the public sector compared to times when they worked

in the private sector.

Three participants (P3, P12, and P16) described salary as a motivating factor for

public service employment. P12 said, "Salary was a consideration. I had a certain

lifestyle that I wanted to maintain. In addition, I had a certain skill set that I brought to

the table and wanted to be compensated for that." P12, unlike other participants,

described salary as a motivating factor. They valued their skills and understood that their

skill set was valuable in the public sector and wanted to be compensated appropriately.

P16 also described salary as important to their second career choice. P16 said, "Salary

was an important factor. Our compensation is directly commensurate with our level of

responsibility. It's directly linked to what we feel as senior retired officers we should be

being paid." These participants acknowledge that their skills and responsibilities are

important for their roles in public service. However, they did not state a desire to compete for top salaries, but rather to be compensated appropriately for their time, responsibilities, and service. Thurs, for some African American retired senior military members, appropriate compensation is an important motivating factor for their public service.

Many participants described trading compensation for the stability with job security given by the federal government. For example, P4 said:

> The difference is a little more stability. What I like about the public sector is that it's more predictable, but you also have a lot of rules and regulations that support the DOD and federal government workers. Whereas in the private sector, if you came in and [upset] a client, they can fire you on the spot. I took a huge pay cut, almost a $40,000 pay cut a year, to take this job in the federal government. You must weigh your options and look long term and be strategic. I didn't like losing that much money. Shoot, I enjoyed it, because it allowed for a lot of flexibility and being able to do things but at the same time, the stability was not there.

P4, like other participants, describes taking a substantial reduction in salary to gain the stability that comes with working for the federal government. P8 also chose stability over salary. P8 said:

> Salary was a consideration. Having retired as a colonel, I had a certain lifestyle. I wanted to do was somewhat sustain that salary and that level of comfort. However, I had a decision to make. I could come in as a contractor with double the salary or come in with a GS salary. I was looking for stability. I chose the government for the stability. That said, I do believe that the government pays us

very well, along with the benefits, which I didn't mention before, but the benefits

was surely a deciding factor.

P8 highlighted the notion of benefits, describing that the benefits package given by the

government complements the job stability offered by the public sector. Together, these

findings indicate that, while the public sector may not compensate employees as much as

the private sector, the public sector has increased stability, which offers employees peace

of mind.

Theme 3: Moral Duty

The final theme elucidated by the participants is that of moral duty. Moral duty is

defined as the pursuit of an activity because the individual deems it to be morally

necessary and correct (Collins, 2019). This theme is related to the themes of sanctity and

care discussed in RQ1. Most participants described being motivated by a desire to serve

the country and its citizens. For example, P16 said, "I am motivated to give service back

to the country that I was born in. The United States has given me everything. I understand

service. It's a selfless job. It's not one where I'm looking for personal gain." P16

described their role in public service to give back to their country. They recognized that

public service is a selfless, and often thankless job, but also describes being motivated to

help U.S. citizens. P10 also described their motivation in terms of patriotism and giving

back to the country. P10 said, "I'm motivated because I know I'm making a difference. I

know what I do is making a difference to my country. That's my priority. It's definitely

not the money." Thus, some participants described a motivation to better the lives of the

American people and continue promoting the growth and development of the United

States.

Some participants highlighted a moral duty to the American citizens. For instance,

P2 said, "I'm motivated by the opportunity to add value and make a difference. I'm

motivated to take what I have learned over 40 years and apply it to improve processes

and systems and to improve service to the American citizenry." P6 also described wanted

to help the American people, first working for the Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) and then subsequently in public service. P6 said:

> I'm motivated by the ability to continue to serve the American people. I think,
>
> being a servant leader through the military, I was drawn to FEMA to help people
>
> before, during and after a disaster. I found that work very challenging, but very
>
> interesting and very fulfilling to be able to use my skill set from a budget
>
> perspective, to be able to defend and garner additional funding for them to meet
>
> their mission. I want to make things more effective and efficient for the American
>
> people who are in desperate need.

These participants describe a deeply ingrained commitment to the American people and

express their motivation for public service in terms of that commitment. Thus, for these

participants, serving their country and its citizens, their moral duty, is a major motivating

force for their employment in public service.

Fourteen participants planned to continue service to their communities after they

retired from public service, further highlighting their commitment to the United States

and its citizens and underscoring their moral duty. For example, P15 said, "'when I retire,

I'll be available part-time and I'll continue to do what I love to do. I'll coach, teach leadership, do learning and development work, and help people grow and develop. I'll still do that work." While P15 believed they would continue to mentor individuals in public service and work in part-time capacity, other participants described wanting to volunteer in their communities. For instance, P7 said:

> I enjoy serving in the church. I enjoy doing things to help people in the church. I am an ordained Deacon. There are certain things that are that I really enjoyed doing in terms of being a servant and aiding people. I also want to take the opportunity to teach children in a volunteer capacity after a retire.

Other participants, including P3, expressed a desire to teach and volunteer with children. P3 believed it was their moral duty to instill patriotic values in children and said:

> I want to teach children about the best country in the world. There is no place like this great nation and there are endless opportunities for success, especially for hard-working individuals. I feel like I have an obligation to share all of my positive experiences with children who are don't have the opportunity to see how great the United States truly is.

Thus, for many participants, their moral duty and service will not end with their retirement from the public sector. Many of them wish to continue serving in whatever capacity they're able in their local communities.

Summary of RQ2

In RQ2, I examined the motivations of retired African American senior military officers to serve in the public sector. Three themes emerged from analysis of the

participants' interviews. First, many participants described being intrinsically motivated. They had a desire to continue service to their country, while still learning and growing professionally. They also were motivated by helping junior officers achieve success. Therefore, this theme is very similar to the themes of authority and care discussed in RQ1, as the participants described being intrinsically motivated by their leadership positions. Second, many participants discussed extrinsic drivers as motivators for their continued service, citing job security and benefits as motivators for working in the public sector. Third, most participants believed their continued service was their moral duty to the country and to the American people.

Summary

Chapter 4 began with a presentation and detailed account of data collection and analysis procedures used in this study. These procedures included use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions with 16 retired African American senior military officers who transitioned to working in the public sector. Interviews were used to explore why these officers chose second careers in public service. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis based on the study's theoretical framework, PSM. Next, I evaluated evidence of the study's trustworthiness by assessing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Chapter 4 then included a presentation of findings related to each research question. For RQ1, I examined participants' perceptions of PSM, which led to five themes: authority, care, fairness, loyalty, and sanctity. Each of these themes was explored using evidence from participants in the form of verbatim quotations. Next, I examined

RQ2 to evaluate participants' PSM. Analysis of data revealed three themes: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic drive, and moral duty. Participants' PSM was largely based on intrinsic motivation and moral duty. They expressed deep desires to continue being of service to their country, American citizens, and their communities. In Chapter 5, I will place the study results in the larger context of literature, examine implications of this study for future research, and make recommendations to improve retention of African American senior military officers in the SES.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the federal government's inability to attract and retain African Americans in the SES via lived experiences of retired African American military officers who currently work for the federal government as civilian employees, but not as contractors. Specifically, I sought to understand reasons why retired African American senior military officers pursued employment with the federal government after their retirement from the military. PSM was chosen as a theoretical framework to underpin analysis of the study.

To understand the PSM of retired African American senior military officers, I completed semi-structured interviews with 16 participants who met inclusion criteria for the study. All participants retired at a rank of O-5 through O-7 from the U.S. Army or Air Force and had transitioned from the military to the public sector, working in capacities ranging from employment at the DoD to the FDIC. Results of interviews indicated participants chose roles in public service due to their commitment to authority, care, fairness, loyalty, and sanctity. Participants were largely intrinsically motivated by moral duty, although some participants did name extrinsic drivers which were factors that influenced their choice to resume work for the federal government after their military retirement. In Chapter 5, I analyze these findings place them within the context of current academic literature.

Interpretation of the Findings

This study was guided by Perry and Wise's PSM construct as the theoretical framework. In this section, I address why retired African American senior military

officers choose to pursue employment in the public sector, rather than the private sector, after their retirement from the U.S. military. The PSM construct involves the desire to serve the public and mirrors personal interest with public interest. Compassion, attraction to public service, commitment to public values, and self-sacrifice are four motives that are central to PSM (Perry & Wise, 1990). PSM is used to highlight the critical role of self-determined motivation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, moral obligation, and behavior in public organizations. Wang et al. (2020) described PSM in terms of five innate moralities: authority, care, fairness, loyalty, and sanctity. Participants demonstrated their PSM in terms of these five moralities, as discussed in Chapter 4. Notably, concepts of authority, care, fairness, loyalty, and sanctity were interrelated for participants.

Authority

Participants valued the multifaceted nature of authority. They viewed their continued service in the public sector as an extension of the authority they gained during their military service. All participants were in leadership positions in their respective public service careers, and many valued their roles as educators and mentors, especially junior officers. Mentorship and authority are considered critical components of PSM (Perry, 2020). Perry (2020) described mentorship as the cornerstone of motivating power of public service, as individuals learn how to be effective leaders from their own experiences with leadership. Some participants expressed frustration with some public service leaders for not empowering and enabling their subordinates. Participants believed

that their continued leadership promoted growth of junior officers into leadership positions.

Authority is not only a cornerstone of public service motivation but also integral to the functioning of both the U.S. military and federal government. In respecting and valuing authority, military and public sector employees demonstrate a commitment to selflessness (Ficapal-Cusí et al., 2020). Leaders with a deep commitment to organizations know how to be effective followers (Einola & Alvesson, 2021). This concept is especially important in public service, as commitment to ideals requires a strong vision as well as sustained leadership (Perry, 2020).

Participants mentioned various leadership practices. Some participants viewed themselves as servant leaders, whereas others demonstrated behaviors which were consistent with both transformational and transactional leadership styles. For example, P16 directly described himself as a servant leader, placing the needs of his subordinates above his own. Servant leadership is a common leadership style among African American leaders (Stauffer & Maxwell, 2020). The servant leadership style exhibited by many African American leaders stems from the need for service arising from the Civil Rights Movement (Sims et al., 2021). Notably, African Americans are still underrepresented in the highest echelons of the federal government (Foster et al., 2020; Starks, 2009). Thus, this style of leadership is still applicable to participants.

Care and Fairness

Participants expressed being motivated by care for their communities, American citizens, and their country. Care entails the capacity to sense other people's suffering

(Wang et al., 2020). Individual rights, liberties, and autonomy are at the heart of care and fairness. Individuals in public service serve ideals that are larger than themselves (Perry, 2020). All participants mentioned the concepts of care or fairness in some manner. Care for communities was further evidenced by the fact that participants reported wanting to volunteer in their communities after retirement. Participants also expressed care for their teams.

Fairness was detailed in various ways by participants. Some participants viewed fairness in terms of authority and addressed their roles as leaders in terms of fairly promoting success of their subordinates. This encompasses fairness to subordinates as well as the public (Perry, 2020). Regarding fairness to the public, some participants expressed their continued service in the public sector in terms of gratitude to the U.S. and its citizens for investment in their success.

Fairness was also associated with authority for participants. Some participants said a drawback of some leaders in the public sector is lack of investment in subordinates. Other participants highlighted the notion of nepotism and explained its negative effects in the public sector. Nepotism decreases the intellectual diversity of organizations by promoting the appointment of likeminded individuals with predictable loyalties (Chassamboulli & Gomes, 2021). Nepotism increases the propensity of conflicts of interest and diminishes the effectiveness of organizations, which is contrary to ideals of PSM.

Loyalty

Loyalty was the main driving force for participants' PSM. Participants described loyalty to various organizations and ideals, including the U.S. and its citizens, the military, and their communities. Individuals motivated to engage in public service often express loyalty to their organizations and ideals (Perry, 2020). Loyalty is an internal motivating factor. Individuals joining and remaining in the military and public service value being a part of organizations along with members who have the same goals (Grigorov, 2020). The desire to serve something higher than oneself keeps individuals past their initial term (Ginexi et al., 1994). Participants expressed caring for the U.S. and its citizens in terms of their continued loyalty through service.

Loyalty is also linked to organizational trust. System-wide factors such as the fairness of an organization's performance assessment system and job security are linked to confidence in management. The U.S. military system facilitates reliable pay, benefits, and employment longevity due to its governmental position, fostering important organizational trust (Cohen, 2019; Singh & Srivastava, 2016). This concept is also true for the senior ranks of GS-14 to GS-15 and the SES. Indeed, the participants highlighted that job security was a motivating factor for employment in the public sector versus the private sector. Moreover, organizational trust is associated with leadership trust, as both the organization and leadership are considered the same (Perry, 2020). Thus, the participants express a loyalty to the government and the United States are a motivating factor in the transition from military to civil service, which is indicative of continued service to the public.

Sanctity

Braender and Andersen (2013) argued it impossible to serve in the military without a reason. Soldiers improve their incentive to serve society when dehumanization occurs, and they are unable to find purpose in serving individual persons (Braender & Andersen, 2013). Moral obligation was a common and strong theme among participants. The viewed their service in the military and in the public sector as their moral obligation. They expressed deep commitment to the sanctity of their missions and expressed a desire to continue working towards the ideals of those missions after their retirement from the military. This finding is consistent with a large body of literature involving PSM. Thus, appealing to the sanctity of missions and the potential for service to humankind is an important aspect of attracting and retaining retired African American senior military officers in the public sector.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are weaknesses in a study that can conceivably lead to validity concerns. There were several limitations of this study. First, potential participants must have secured employment with a federal government agency prior inclusion in the study. This inclusion criterion was a limitation of the study because, in 2011, the Secretary of Defense mandated by executive order that all military members who are leaving service receive transition counseling as far out as 24 months before separation. Thus, individuals currently serving in the U.S. military at ranks of O-5 or greater with intentions of transitioning to the public sector were excluded from the study. Engaging within individuals in transition planning could have provided important insight into their

perceptions about seeking employment with a public organization. However, the choice to delimit the study population to individuals currently working in the public sector, not the military, was made due to the challenges of public disclosure policies imposed by the military services.

Another limitation of this study derives from the sample characteristics. All participants retired at a rank of O-5 through O-7 from the U.S. Army or Air Force. The study did not contain participants from U.S. Navy or Marine Corp. Thus, the results of the study may not be transferable to a more general population of retired African American senior military officers. Similarly, by methodological design, all participants were African American, and the study results may not be transferrable to any retired senior military officer from an ethnic minority group. Thus, these findings may be specific to the cultures of Army and Air Force and more research is necessary to understand whether African American senior military officers in other branches have experiences similar to the participants interviewed in this study.

Sample size was not a limitation in this study. Data saturation was reached after approximately 11 participants. Five more interviews were conducted to further ensure that saturation had been reached. In this study, saturation was evidenced by the small number of themes elucidated by most of the participants. Phenomenological research designs have a drawback concerning bias (Miller et al., 2018). I personally experienced many of the same experiences as these senior African American military officers, and it encouraged me during the interviews to hear about their motivations for continued public service. I worked hard to mitigate the limitation of researcher bias by engaging in

multiple reflexivity protocols. Specifically, I took reflexivity notes during the interviews to account for my own feelings and biases as a researcher. I believe that the reflexivity and bracketing process allowed me to put my own feelings aside and analyze the data objectively.

Recommendations

In this section, I make recommendations for how the federal government can recruit and retain African American senior military officers who have transitioned from their military careers to second careers in the public sector.

Recommendations for Recruitment to the Public Sector

There are five main recommendations for the recruitment of retired African American senior military officers to second careers in the public sector. The first recommendation is for the federal government to develop specific and targeted recruitment strategies for retiring African American military officers. This could include partnering with organizations that support retired military officers, such as the Association of the United States Army or the National Association for Black Veterans. The government could also host job fairs or facilitate networking events specifically for this population of military officers. Collaboration efforts should focus on organizations that support and advocate for African American veterans, leveraging social media platforms and online communities, and actively engaging with retired military officers through career fairs, conferences, and outreach programs. Second, the government and military can offer leadership development programs tailed to the needs of retiring African American military officers. These programs can provide access to executive-level

coaching, mentorship, and training of the leadership skills necessary and specific for the SES. Moreover, such programs and outreach can educate retiring military officers regarding their options for a second career in the public sector. Thus, military officer education is a crucial recommendation for recruiting African American senior military officers to the service in the public sector.

The participants highlighted networking as an essential skill required for their continued success in the public sector. Therefore, the public sector and military branches should engage with retired military officer associations to build rapport and a support network. Building relationships with associations that support retired military officers, such as the Military Officers Association of America or the National Guard Association of the United States could be critical for this effort. These associations can help connect agencies with talented retired African American military officers, provide professional development resources and offer essential networking opportunities.

The next set of recommendations addresses the systemic barriers present in the military and public sector. It is important to increase the visibility of African American retired military officers by highlighting the achievements of those who have successfully transitioned to the SES. This recommendation includes featuring the stories and experiences of retired African American senior military officers in agency publications and on agency websites, inviting them to speak at conferences and events and showcasing their achievements, skills, and contributions in agency-wide communication. It is also important to improve diversity and inclusion policies and practices, providing clear

opportunities for career advancement and ensuring fair and equitable hiring and promotion practices.

Recommendations for Retainment of African American Senior Military Officers in the Public Sector

Once recruited to the public sector, employee retainment efforts are also necessary to effectively maintain and increase the diversity of the public sector. Thus, recommendations for retainment of retired African American senior military officers in the public sector are equally important as recruitment efforts. A first recommendation is to promote diversity and inclusion in the public sector, which does not reflect the diversity of the United States nor of the U.S. military (OPM, 2020). It is important to implement policies and practices that actively promote diversity and inclusion within the SES cadre. This includes creating a welcoming and inclusive environment that values the unique perspectives and contributions of African American retired military officers. To this end, the U.S. military and the federal government can facilitate networking and mentorship opportunities that connect current SES members with retired African American military officers to foster a sense of belonging and support.

All of the participants in this study valued the authority of the U.S. government and the military and took pride in their roles as mentors and leaders. A positive step towards both recruiting and retaining retired African American senior military officers in the public sector could be creating formal mentoring and sponsorship programs that pair African American retired military officers with current SES members who can offer guidance, support, and advocacy. Mentors and sponsors can help navigate the

complexities of the SES, provide career advice, and offer opportunities for visibility and advancement.

Addressing current barriers and present bias is another important recommendation. The government should continually assess the potential barriers and biases that may exist within the SES cadre and work to eliminate them. This includes addressing systemic issues, unconscious bias, and any policies or practices that may unintentionally hinder the retention and advancement of retired African American military officers. It is important to implement transparent evaluation processes and performance metrics to ensure fairness and equal opportunities for all SES members.

The participants noted that job security and continued professional development were important for their continued public service motivation. Therefore, it is recommended that that the federal government establish an employee resource center focused on supporting the career progression and well-being of African American retired military officers. The center can provide resources, information, and guidance on various topics such as career development, work-life balance, mental health, and diversity and inclusion initiatives. Developing a robust succession planning program that identifies and prepares retired African American military officers for leadership positions within the SES cadre could also be fruitful. Retention in the public sector can be enhanced by offering clear pathways for advancement, ensuring equitable access to high-profile assignments and projects, and actively promoting their participation in strategic initiatives and decision-making processes.

While the participants in this study were largely motivated intrinsically and by moral duty, external drivers also played a role in their public service motivation. Many valued the flexibility and work-life balance offered by the public sector. Therefore, a final recommendation for retention is to recognize the importance of work-life balance and provide flexible work arrangements to accommodate the needs of retired African American military officers. Policies and practices should be implemented that support remote work, alternative work schedules, and family-friendly initiatives, fostering a supportive environment that values their well-being.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was delimited to retired African American senior military officers who transitioned to working in the public sector after their retirement from the military. The study had some important delimitations, including the choice of one demographic group, namely African Americans, and one class of military officers, namely those who retired at a rank of O-5 through O-7. All participants in the study resided in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, including surrounding localities in Maryland and Virginia. See Tables 2 and 3 for a summary of the participants' demographic information. Due to the delimitations chosen for the study, the study's findings may not be transferrable to other military officer populations. Therefore, future avenues of research could investigate the perceptions of other ethnic minorities who retired from the U.S. military at senior ranks.

Another avenue of research is to investigate the perceptions of junior officers regarding their intentions to pursue public service. A significant proportion of U.S. military retirees are junior officers (Schult et al., 2019). This population represents a large

number of individuals who could be recruited to public service. Consequently, a future

avenue of research is to investigate the perceptions of junior military officers regarding

public service motivation. Such insights may lead to further information on how to

prepare, recruit and retain talented military officers in public service after their retirement

from the military.

Implications

This study found that retired African American senior military officers who

transitioned to the public sector after retirement from the military are motivated for

public service based on authority, care, fairness, loyalty and sanctity. This finding has

far-reaching ramifications for social change. The federal government is highly prominent

example of an organization that has traditionally been perceived as a male-dominated,

White-centric organization. Problems recruiting and retaining ethnically diverse

individuals may impact the functioning and public perception of the government. African

Americans' departure or absence from the public sector demonstrates a need for

increased diversity and inclusion measures. To maintain a more diverse and equitable

organization, the federal government must actively pursue the recruitment and retention

of talented African Americans. This may involve expanding mentorship and career

development for African American military officers and creating programs to ensure that

African Americans have equal opportunities.

It may be necessary to address underlying structural concerns in the public sector

to ensure that African Americans are afforded equal chances. This could involve

bolstering the number of talented, qualified, African Americans in senior military

leadership positions. Laws and procedures should also be reexamined to ensure that they do not disproportionally affect African Americans. The conclusion that African American senior military officers are motivated for public service based on authority, care, fairness, loyalty and sanctity should be interpreted as a demand for a broader social transformation. The public sector is only one example of a traditionally White-centered organization. The findings are a striking reminder that society still has further to go in reaching racial equality. This can involve campaigning for better racial representation in other sectors and encouraging organizations to develop equal and inclusive work conditions for all individuals. Overall, the findings have substantial social change implications. The federal government has the potential to serve as an example of how an organization can promote racial equality and equity by identifying the need for greater racial diversity and inclusion and actively working to address structural inequities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the federal government's inability to attract and retain African Americans in the SES cadre through the lived experiences of retired African American military officers who currently work for the federal government as civilian employees, but not as contractors. The study found that retired African American senior military officers are intrinsically motivated by moral duty for continued service in the public sector. These findings were analyzed using Perry and Wise's public service motivation, which elucidated that the participants are driven for service based on authority, care, fairness, loyalty and sanctity. Many participants expressed a continued drive for service for the country in a manner that could only be

continued in the public sector. These findings suggest that retired African American senior military officers are driven to public service based on the same motivations that allowed them to be successful as officers in the U.S. military.

It is the researcher's profound hope that this study will have social implications for the public sector. The findings of this study indicate that African American senior military officers should be recruited and embraced by the federal government. The U.S. federal government has an opportunity, and perhaps, an obligation to make the changes necessary for African American senior military officers to make a smooth transition to continued service after their retirement from the military. These individuals are motivated out of a selfless devotion to the country, a drive that should not be unnoticed or unrecognized. African American senior military officers should be offered all of the benefits and opportunities of working for the federal government, including continued opportunities for career advancement after retirement. Changes that facilitate their transition to the public sector have the potential to create a more diverse, equitable and stronger military and public sector.

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Appendix A: U.S. Military Branch and Rank Structure

Appendix B: Recruitment Flier

RESEARCH STUDY

Volunteers Needed

to participate in a one-on-one Zoom interview for 45-60 minutes.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- To understand the perceptions of retired African American senior military officers about public service in the federal government as civilian employees as a second career choice after retirement from the military.
- To understand what motivating factors contribute to retired African American senior military officers' public service career choice after military retirement.

PARTICIPANT CRITERIA

- Participants must have retired from the military after at least 20 years of service
- Participants must have retired at the rank of O-5 or above
- Participants must be of African American descent
- Participants must currently work in the federal public sector as civilian employees, not as contractors.

PLEASE EMAIL

THIS STUDY IS BEING CONDUCTED BY TODD BURGESS, A DOCTORAL STUDENT AT WALDEN UNIVERSITY

Appendix C: Demographic/Screening Questions

1. Are you willing to participate in this research?

2. How many years did you serve?

3. Are you now retired from the military?

4. What was your rank at retirement?

5. Are you of African American descent?

6. Do you currently work in the federal public sector as a civilian employee (not as a contractor)?

7. Are you available for an interview likely to last one hour (via Zoom)?

8. Do you agree to have the interview audio-taped?

9. Will you review the interview transcripts for accuracy?

10. Will you permit publication of data not identifiable to you?

11. Do you understand that you can withdraw from the study at any time?

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Demographics:

A. What was your official retirement date from active duty?

B. When were you born?

C. Are you married?

D. Do you have children? What are their ages?

E. When did you begin work for the public sector?

F. Where do you work?

G. What is your position?

Study questions:

1. What are the things you like best about your job and why?

2. What do you like about working in the public sector?

3. What do you dislike?

4. Was salary a consideration when job hunting?

   Probing: If not, what were the considerations? Of what importance is salary to

you in your current job?

5. How do your friends and family feel about what you do (now)?

6. When you think about your current job or other public-sector jobs you

have held since retirement, what comes to mind as your primary reason

for working at that job?

7. Have any of your family members had careers in the public sector? If so,

who and what did they do?

8.   Explain what motivates you at work.

9. When you retire from the public sector, or leave work in the public sector,

what do you plan to do (i.e., not work, work part-time, volunteer)?

   Probing: If you plan to continue to work in some capacity, what are your primary

reasons and why?

10. Have you considered seeking employment in the private sector at any

time since your retirement? If so, why? If not, why not?

Appendix E: NIHE Certificate

Completion Date	04-Dec-2022
Expiration Date	N/A
Record ID	53048997

This is to certify that:

ANSARA BURGESS

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

Student's
(Curriculum Group)
Doctoral Student Researchers
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Walden University

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w60ffe087-2ca2-4dbc-a75f-5c51f648cd95-53048997

Appendix F: Instrument Permission

M Gmail

Ansara Burgess <██████████████>

Instrument Authorization

Wardlaw, Kathy ███████████████████████████████
To: Ansara Todd Burgess <███████████████

Mon, Jan 27, 2014 at 8:57 AM

Todd, yes, your use of the instrument is fine with me. Good luck and I appreciate you keeping me posted on your research!

Kathy

Kathy Wardlaw, Ph.D.

[Quoted text hidden]

📄 **smime.p7s**
6K