Ethos Reinforced, Government Endorsed?
Comparing Pre-Entry and Post-Entry Values, Motivations, Sector Perceptions, and Career Preferences of MPA Students in Asia

ABSTRACT

This paper compares pre-entry (T=0) and post-entry (T=1) personal values, job motivations, sector perceptions, and career preferences of two cohorts of professional MPA students (n=97) in Asia. We triangulate data from surveys, focus groups, and exit interviews in a quasi-experimental setting. On the one hand, our findings confirm that MPA programs attract students whose job motivations and sector perceptions are already skewed towards the public sector, particularly those enrolling directly from the public sector. On the other hand, overall appreciation of values associated with and preference for public sector employment goes down during the program while preference for private sector employment goes up. Students with pre-enrolment public sector careers, however, have significantly higher levels of public service motivation at the moment of graduation than those with pre-enrolment careers outside government. We conclude with implications of these findings for the study and practice of public administration education.

INTRODUCTION

Do Public Policy Schools produce graduates with a genuine public service motivation and a preference for public sector employment? This question featured in recent debates on the raison d'être of Public Policy schools (Choo 2014; Moynihan 2014; Piereson and Schaefer Riley 2013)[1]. What sparked the debate was a notorious – and ultimately successful – lawsuit by the Robertson family against Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School. The founding donors were angry because the school increasingly churned out consultants and bankers rather than public servants as their initial mission suggested. Other leading schools show a similar graduate profile (Piereson and Schaefer Riley 2013). Our paper contributes to this debate by examining whether a Public Policy school in Asia fulfills its mission to produce leaders with high public service motivation (PSM) that aspire a career in – or close to – public service.

What does existing research tell us about Public Policy school students? Studies show such schools usually attract students with high levels of PSM, "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (Perry and Wise 1990: 368), and appreciation of public values (Kjeldsen and Jacobsen 2013; Rose 2013; Vandenabeele 2008). This, in turn, leads to preference for post-graduate public sector or non-profit employment (Gabris and Davis, 2009; Redman-Simmons, 2008; Rose 2013), although sectoral demarcations seem to matter less to the new, millennial generation (Schultz 2016). However, as most studies are cross-sectional they do not tell us whether values, motivations, and job preferences change *during let alone because of* public policy education. Rare studies employing longitudinal designs to track changes during enrollment (Kennedy and Malatesta 2010; Newcomer and Allen 2012; Stuteville and DiPadova-Stocks 2011), show *how* attributes and attitudes change but not so much *why* that is the case, with few exceptions (Kjeldsen and Jacobsen 2013).

In addition, these studies target almost without exception students in the West. However, we may wonder whether their findings are easily transferable to some of the major countries in Asia we study. For instance, a comparative study between MPP and MPA students from China and the US shows the latter are more driven by extrinsic factors (Infeld et al. 2009), whereas intrinsic motivators primarily drive Western (future) public managers in a context of modest salaries and social status compared to the private sector. Indeed, government jobs have high stature in many East Asian and South East Asian countries (Infeld et al. 2010; Norris 2004),

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[1] *The Washington Post*, The Problem with Public Policy Schools, Dec 6 2013; *www.appam.org*, Why Policy Schools Really Matter, June 11 2014; *Global-is-Asian*, The Role of Public Policy Schools, Feb 2014.

and often provide better primary and secondary benefits than private sector jobs (Fan 2007; Taylor and Beh 2013; Xu 2006). This may apply to MPA students in particular as they enroll with substantive working experience and a mindset skewed towards a particular sectoral ethos (Infeld et al. 2011).

Elucidating how potential future leaders of some of the region's most emerging countries like China, India, and Indonesia view working life and how they evaluate various sectors is highly relevant as they will bring the "Asian century" (Mahbubani 2008; Vielmetter and Sell 2014) to full fruition in the years to come. So far, however, our field has viewed public administration in the Asian century mostly through a Western lens (Bice and Sullivan 2014).

In this paper we examine whether a 1-year fulltime MPA program at a prominent Public Policy school in Asia affects students' values, attitudes, and preferences. We do so by creating a quasi-experimental setting in which we subject two cohorts of students to pre-entry and post-entry surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The following question guides our study:

How and why do pre-entry and post-entry personal values, job motivations, sector perceptions, and career preferences of MPA students at a Public Policy School in Asia differ?

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, we synthesize existing literature on how educational and organizational socialization affect values and motivations, and how education affects career preferences, formulating hypotheses for empirical testing. Then we explain our methodology and sample, and how we derived the items for our questionnaire and focus group guide. After presenting our quantitative and qualitative data, we discuss our findings by positioning them in the broader literature on the impact of public administration education. We conclude with limitations and suggestions for further study.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Effects of Organizational Environment on Values and Work Motivations

Previous studies have shown that organizational environments shape individual value perceptions and work motivations. Camilleri (2007) argues that the PSM of public employees is mainly the result of their organizational environment. Organizational characteristics, such as positive employee leader relations, job grade, organizational tenure, the way individuals deal with others, and friendship opportunities at the workplace, associate positively with PSM (Kjeldsen and Hansen 2016; Moynihan and Pandey 2007; Ritz et al. 2016). Bright (2005) also substantiates the positive association between organizational environment, values, and work

motivations. He concludes socialization mechanisms are present in public organizations. Furthermore, by surveying teachers from nine Flemish non-profit teacher-training institutes about their work values and Person-Organization fit (Cable and Parsons 2001; Kristof-Brown 1996), De Cooman et al. (2009) conclude that individuals adapt their values depending on the organizational environment. Thus, socialization processes ensure fit between newcomers and organizations (cf. Jackall 1988).

Van Gelder and Dougherty (2012) also shed some light on the socializing effects of organizational environment. Using Moore's (1995) public value framework, they compare how public administration students with and without prior professional experience approach a particular design problem – developing a playground. They find substantial differences between both groups, especially in terms of understanding political context. Particularly, experience-based students were much more likely to exhibit what Moore argues helps to create public value, providing evidence for the effect of public sector work environment on molding desired work values and attitudes.

A substantial number of studies explore the impact of employment sector on work motivations. Most literature in this field argues that public sector employees have higher levels of PSM than their private sector counterparts. For instance, by analyzing data from the various large employee surveys, Wright and Kim (2004) concluded that public sector employees have different motivations and expectations than their private sector counterparts and this result is likely to be tied closely to the mission and goals of the organization (cf. Moynihan and Pandey 2007; omitted).

Yet, some findings run contrary to this notion as they suggest that employment experience has no significant impact on values and work motivations. Anderson et al. (2011) find no difference in the general level of PSM between Danish physiotherapists in the public and private sector in a large-scale survey. This may suggest that employment sector has minimal impact on work motivations. While De Cooman et al. (2009) suggests that organizational socialization serves to enhance employees' personal work values and their organizations' values they also note that attrition mechanisms occur simultaneously. In short: whether the individual stays or leaves the organization depends on her original fit with the organization. This, in turn, weakens the socializing effect of the organization on individuals' values and work motivations. To explore whether the MPA students in our sample enter the program with a different baseline level of PSM and inclination to pursue postgraduate public sector employment due to their prior work experience, we test the following hypotheses:

H[1] Students with pre-enrollment public sector work experience will have higher levels of PSM and appreciation of values associated with public sector work than those with private sector or non-profit sector working experience.

H[2] Students with pre-enrollment public sector work experience will be more likely to prefer public sector employment again after they graduate

Effects of Education on Personal Values and Work Motivations

Numerous studies have confirmed the socializing role of education in shaping individual values and work motivations. Herbert and Wright (1979) show in a classical study using data from thirty-eight national polls that education increases general knowledge, awareness of public affairs, receptivity to new information, and information-seeking behavior. Kingston et al.'s (2003) study draws a similar conclusion. Through a secondary analysis of survey data from the US General Social Survey (1991-1998), they found that despite substantial mediating impacts of cognitive ability and socio-economic status, there were strong educational effects on civil liberties, gender equality, social capital, and cultural capital.

In particular, Newcomer and Allen (2012: 208) delve into the socializing effects of public policy education in positively affecting individuals' levels of PSM (cf. Rose 2013). Similarly, Stuteville and DiPadova-Stocks (2011) and Kennedy and Malatesta (2010) acknowledge the positive impacts of public policy education on cultivation of values and ethics. Both studies call for greater emphasis on values and ethics in the curricula of public policy education programs in the face of the new challenges brought by accelerated globalization.

However, Egerton's (2002) study, focusing on the efforts of tertiary education on social and civic engagement of young people, provides some contrary evidence. Although he found a significant difference of levels of civic engagement between young people who entered high education and those who did not, he found little additional effect of education, concluding that the differences existed prior to higher education.

Likewise, through the comparison of the espoused values preferences between students and alumni from four professional programs at the University of Kansas, Edwards and Wedel (1981) found that students entering different professional educational programs appear to have different espoused value preferences. Nonetheless, there was a minimal difference between the values espoused by alumni and first-year students, suggesting that education may play an insignificant role in affecting value patterns. In the same vein, studies suggest different people-types are drawn to different degree programs in the first place because of pre-educational

socialization processes (Blau and Duncan 1967; De Graaf and De Graaf 1996; GMAC 2012; Ng. et al. 2008; Van Hooft 2004).

Lastly, Kjeldsen's (2012) analysis of PSM levels of Danish students enrolled in different vocational education programs shows that the socializing effect of higher education depends on students' field of study. Although the estimated level of PSM among students in non-core public service studies increases with years of study, PSM levels of their public service counterparts stay the same across different educational stages. Thus, high levels of PSM among public policy students seem to be the result of an attraction effect.

Whether one's value perceptions and work motivations are the result of self-selection or socializing effects of education, and how one multiplies the other, is subject of ongoing scholarly debate. To test whether taking an MPA program increases PSM levels and appreciation of values associated with public sector employment we formulate the following hypotheses:

H[3] Students will show a stronger appreciation of values associated with public sector employment at the end of their MPA program than at the start

H[4] Students will display higher levels of PSM at the end of their program than at the start

Effects of Public Policy Education Programs on Career Preferences

Whether MPP and MPA graduates are more likely – and perhaps, should be more likely – to join the public sector than the private or non-profit sector has been debated by practitioners and scholars alike. For example, by surveying faculty members of schools and departments that offer both MPP and MPA programs, Hur and Hackbart (2009) found that their graduates are most likely to end up in the public and non-profit sector. In a similar vein, Infeld and Adams (2011) found that both MPP and MPA students preferred working in the public and non-profit sectors vis-à-vis the private sector: both were equally inclined towards having a career in which they were able to make "a contribution to the society" (cf. omitted).

At the same time, however, Woolcock (2002: 5) points out that many MPP graduates end up courting a broad array of employers who offer them "a modest salary, relative low-level responsibilities, and little long-term job security".

These studies provide important insights into the effect of public policy education on students' career preferences. However, it is not yet clear to what extent graduate sectoral

employment preferences are actually guided – or reinforced – by their education. Hence, testing the following hypotheses may provide useful contributions to the scholarly literature:

H[5] MPA students will have more positive public sector perceptions upon graduation than at the start of their program

H[6] MPA students will choose the public or non-profit sector as preferred future sector of employment over the private sector

H[7] MPA students will display a stronger preference for public sector and non-profit employment upon graduation than at the start of their program

H[8] Positive public sector perceptions are related to a preference for postgraduate public sector employment

Types of Motivations related to Government Employment

Although studies have consistently confirmed a positive association between preference for "doing work that is useful to society" and public sector employment, several studies have suggested that extrinsic rewards (especially financial rewards) also play a salient role in determining individuals' choice of career (Chen and Hsieh 2014; Liu and Tang 2011; Perry and Liu 2014; omitted). For example, by surveying students from two top-tier law schools in the US with a policy capturing research design, Christensen and Wright (2011) suggest that PSM does not automatically increase employee's attraction to or satisfaction with public employment. Instead, financial rewards still play a prominent role in individuals' job choice.

Lewis and Frank (2002) explore how individuals' demographic characteristics and the importance they place on various job qualities influence their preference for employment in the public sector. They also find that the more strongly respondents valued high income, the more likely they were to prefer government employment. Ko and Jun's (2015) study about job motivations and career preferences of undergraduates in Singapore, China and Korea found a positive association between the motivation to benefit society and public sector job preference among Singaporean and Korean students. Nonetheless, the authors also note that while intrinsic motivators are important, students' choice of public sector employment is in fact affected by a mixture of extrinsic motivators such as career prospect as well as students' perception of their own government.

Others have distinguished between *public service motivation* – more intrinsic, idealistic motivators driving public sector employment – and *public sector motivation* – more extrinsic

motivators related to pay, stability, and job security (omitted). To examine how such motivations play a role in the choice for public sector employment, and how perceptions of government affect employment preference we test the following hypotheses:

H[9] Students who prefer the public sector as postgraduate sector of employment have higher levels of public *service* motivation than public *sector* motivation
H[10] Students who prefer the public sector as postgraduate sector of employment have higher levels of public sector motivation than private sector motivation

METHOD

Mixed Methods Quasi-Experimental Design
We employed a "mixed methods" approach (e.g., Creswell 2003) because we want to show not only *if* MPA education affects the propensity towards values, motivations, and career preferences of future managers but also *why* this is the case, and *how they word* their motives and preferences for degree programs and future employment (cf. omitted). So far, studies into motivations, values, and preferences of students – or managers, for that matter – are almost without exception quantitative in nature, with some exceptions (Pedersen 2014; Ritz 2015; omitted). As a result, we lack more substantive insights into *the reasons and justifications* for choosing degree programs and sectors of employment. To produce such insights, we include an open question in our questionnaire on the reason for sector preference, and we complement our survey data with data from focus groups and interviews (cf. Van Steden et al. 2015; Van der Wal and Oosterbaan 2010, 2013; Van der Wal 2011, 2013; Van der Wal and Yang 2015).

Usually, studies into the impact of educational programs use single-time cross-sectional data to explore whether perceived training effectiveness is positively correlated with dependent variables. As we are interested in the change of values, motivations, perceptions, and preferences before and after training, "an experimental design that allows the comparison between a pretest and a posttest would be a more preferable method as it provides a clearer time frame and causality" (Chen and Chen 2016: 15).

Despite being frequently propagated, pure experiments are not widely employed in public administration studies due to legal, ethical, and budgetary concerns (Chen and Chen 2016). A pure experiment requires both (i) the random selection of treatment and control groups and (ii) a pretest-posttest comparison for both treatment and control groups (Wellington and

Szczerbinski 2007). In our study, it would be both unethical and illegal to create a control group by excluding some students from completing their program. A quasi-experimental research setting, however, is feasible (cf. Tummers et al. 2015). While there are several types of quasi-experimental designs (e.g., post-test only design, non-random selection of control groups, time series, etc.), the most suitable one here is pretest-posttest design without a control group. This method allows us to make inferences about the impact of the intervention by comparing pretest and posttest results (Wellington and Szczerbinski 2007), in this case pre-entry and post-entry into the program. To reduce inference bias, we further examine the relationship between pretest-posttest difference and perceived program effect through qualitative data (focus groups, open survey questions, and exit interviews).

Sample and Respondent Selection

Our respondents are the 2013/14 (n=58) and 2014/15 (n=39) cohorts of students entering a fulltime MPA program at a School of Public Policy at a highly ranked university in South East Asia. The program is directed towards mid-career employees with 6-8 years of working experience. Around eighty percent of the participants are in their thirties; all of them had more than 5 years of working experience, with just two students clocking more than 10 years. We conducted our surveys and focus groups right at the start of their degree programs in August 2013 and August 2014. We conducted the survey in person in the classroom, and we approached missing respondents online afterwards. After meeting students who did not partake initially face-to-face we recorded a total of 97 respondents, reflecting a hundred percent response rate in both cohorts. Our sample includes respondents from 15 different Asia-Pacific countries. China, India, Indonesia, and Singapore make up over eighty percent of our respondents. We do want to stress, however, that it is not our research aim to compare countries and our sample size does not allow us to do so. We are well aware of the limited generalizability of our findings beyond these two cohorts. Table 1 provides basic respondent characteristics.

Questionnaire and measures

The basic questionnaire included 11 questions on background characteristics, socialization factors, and preferred sector of employment (cf. Van der Wal 2017a); 13 items on public and private sector work motivations; 10 personal values associated with careers in both sectors, and 10 items on sector perceptions. We describe the items we used, and how we combined them into our variables below. Appendix 1 provides descriptive statistics for all items used.

Table 1:   Respondent characteristics in percentages (n=97)

Respondent characteristics (n=97)		
Age		
20-24	1.0	
25-29	8.2	
30-34	41.2	
35-39	37.1	
40 and older	12.4	
Gender		
Male	60.8	
Female	39.2	
Sector of full time pre-enrollment employment		
Public Sector	70.1	
Private Sector	19.6	
Non-Profit Sector	10.3	
Preferred sector of postgraduate employment	**T=0**	**T=1**
Public Sector	67.0	62.0
Private Sector	17.6	22.8
Non-Profit Sector	15.4	15.2

We included items on both *public and private sector work motivation* to characterize the motivational profile of our respondents (Van der Wal and Oosterbaan 2013). An important related theme in the literature obviously is the contrast between intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Buelens and van den Broeck 2007: 66; Karl and Sutton 1998; omitted). Here, we decided to include not just items on PSM but also on extrinsic motivations classically associated with public sector work (cf. Perry and Hondeghem 2008), and internalized positive views directed towards both sectors, being different from more general sector perceptions. After all, we also wanted to test the socializing effect of working environments. Given that our respondents already have substantive working experience they may hold fairly classical public and private sector related motivations. In line with the mission of the school, however, we would expect public *service* motivations rather than public *sector* motivations to go up as a result of the program.

The items measuring public *sector* work motivation are: "contributing to society," "balancing work and family obligations," and "an intellectually stimulating work environment". We added the statement: "It is best for society when the public sector is responsible for the provision of crucial collective goods, such as energy, public transport and safety" to measure an overall positive inclination towards the public sector (cf. omitted). To

measure *PSM*, we included the items "meaningful public service is very important to me," "considering the welfare of others is important to me," and "being service oriented to others" (cf. Kjeldsen and Jacobsen 2013; Rose 2013). The private sector motivations are "being successful," "a high salary", "total commitment to my employer," and "having a good salary", "my career will be more important than family after graduation," and "I like to be successful in creating innovative products and services". We added the statement: "It is best for society when the market is given maximal leeway."

We asked respondents to indicate on a five-point Likert scale whether they considered the characteristics important, with answer categories ranging from "very important" to not important at all". For the theses, we asked respondents whether they agreed; again on a 5-point Likert scale, this time with answer categories from "totally agree" to "totally disagree". Reliability tests for two of our three variables produced sufficient Cronbach Alpha reliability scores: .375 (Public sector motivation), 0.618 (PSM), and .534 (Private sector motivation). Public sector motivation is a newly constructed variable consisting of four items, combining intrinsic and extrinsic motivators which may explain its low reliability. We still include the variable in our analyses to observe any differences with PSM and private sector motivation.

The literature on values shows a clear contrast between *public and private values* (omitted). Stackman et al. (2006) distinguish different personal values related to a career in the private and public sectors, as do Buelens and van den Broeck (2007). Based on these studies on value differences, five public and five private values were selected: 'equality,' 'peace,' 'self-sacrifice,' 'justice' and 'compassion,' versus 'accomplishment,' 'joy,' 'prosperity,' 'change' and 'power'. We combined the five public values into a new variable PUBVALUE and did the same for the private values, PRIVVALUE with high Cronbach alphas: .790 and .698 respectively.

We measured *negative and positive perceptions of government* with the following theses (omitted): "In general, government is very bureaucratic," "Those choosing a career in government are often less ambitious than those choosing a career in business," and "When you work for government, you are often caught in a web of political interests" (negative); and "When you work for government, you can contribute positively to society," and "Government is a much friendlier working environment than business" (positive) (Taylor 2010).

In the same vein, as the private sector is perceived to be more competitive than the public sector with a less collegial working climate as a consequence (omitted), we included the following (negative) theses: "In the business sector, there is a lot of competitiveness between colleagues," "In the business sector, people often play 'dirty games' to maximize profit," and

"When you are working in the business sector, you are only concerned with your own benefits and that of your company". The positive perceptions of the private sector are reflected in the statements: "In general, business works much more efficiently and effectively than government," and "In the business sector it is easier to get promoted to a better position." Here, we combined the items for positive public sector perceptions with those for negative private sector perceptions into a new variable POSPUB; in turn, we combined positive private sector perceptions with negative public sector perceptions into the variable POSPRIV. Both combined variables produced sufficient Cronbach Alpha reliability scores: 0.527 and 0.601.

Lastly, in addition to mandating respondents to choose a preferred sector (public, private, or non-profit), we asked them in an open question to state in one sentence why their preference lies with that sector. This allows us to contextualize their preferences and code, cluster, and rank their justifications, and respondents to express potential doubts or ambiguities.

Focus groups and exit interviews

To add to our survey, and to gain in-depth understanding of students' views and choices, we conducted four focus groups with between four and seven participants in each session, using the "Delphi Method" (Rowe and Wright 1999). Sessions lasted between 50 and 70 minutes. We conducted these focus groups with a combined total of 26 participants within two weeks after respondents took our survey. The format aimed to produce interactive, deliberative and respectful (though not necessarily consensual) exchanges of views guided by three engagement questions and four exploration questions (e.g., Creswell 2003; Morgan 2008). We discussed two key topics – views of working life in the public, private, and non-profit sectors based on participants' experiences, and motives for applying for the program. At the end of the program we held 10 exit interviews about the experienced merit of the degree program and how it had changed students' views of issues and sectors.

FINDINGS

Table 2 indicates that students enrolling from the public sector score higher on PSM and positive public sector perceptions compared to those enrolling with private sector and non-profit backgrounds, but lower on public values and public sector motivation.

Table 2: Students with (n=68) and without (n=29) pre-entry public sector experience

Variables		Pre-entry *private or non-profit*		Pre-entry *public*		T-Test
		Mean	SD	**Mean**	SD	**P-value**
PSM	Pre-entry (T=0)	4.160	0.460	4.313	0.536	0.202
	Post-entry (T=1)	4.120	0.499	4.338	0.501	0.065*
Public sector motivation	Pre-entry (T=0)	4.466	0.339	4.429	0.439	0.692
	Post-entry (T=1)	4.380	0.354	4.343	0.456	0.717
Private sector motivation	Pre-entry (T=0)	3.557	0.446	3.602	0.535	0.689
	Post-entry (T=1)	3.647	0.447	3.639	0.416	0.941
Public values	Pre-entry (T=0)	7.855	1.680	7.742	1.349	0.729
	Post-entry (T=1)	7.312	1.547	7.288	1.598	0.949
Positive public sector perceptions	Pre-entry (T=0)	3.678	0.631	3.740	0.547	0.633
	Post-entry (T=1)	3.704	0.520	3.736	0.530	0.794
Positive private sector perceptions	Pre-entry (T=0)	3.518	0.518	3.426	0.643	0.512
	Post-entry (T=1)	3.584	0.571	3.556	0.575	0.842
Future preferred sector of employment	Pre-entry (T=0)	0.360	0.490	0.800	0.403	0.000***
	Post-entry (T=1)	0.240	0.435	0.776	0.420	0.000***

*=p<0.1, **=p<0.05, ***p<0.01

However, at the time of enrollment, they are much more inclined to go back to the public sector after they graduate. Differences for post-entry PSM and pre-entry and post-entry postgraduate sector preference are significant between those with and those without public sector backgrounds. However, scores on all other public sector related variables slightly decrease for public professionals during enrollment while attitudes towards the private sector get slightly more positive. It should be noted that differences are small and non-significant.

As the findings in Table 3 show, the comparison between pre-entry and post-entry work motivations, sector perceptions, and employment preference for all students produces no significant differences. Significant differences can only be seen for values associated with public sector employment, with overall appreciation going *down* during the program. Moreover, postgraduate public sector preference slightly decreases as well (see also Table 1).

Table 3: Pre-entry and post-entry differences (n=97)

Item	Pre-entry (T=0)		Post-entry (T=1)		T-Test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	P-value
PSM	4.267	0.535	4.269	0.514	0.985
Public sector motivation	4.440	0.409	4.352	0.427	0.150
Private sector motivation	3.589	0.508	3.645	0.422	0.412
Public values	7.777	1.327	7.287	1.361	0.027**
Positive public sector perceptions	3.722	0.570	3.724	0.523	0.982
Negative public sector perceptions	3.453	0.608	3.558	0.571	0.228
Preference for public sector employment upon graduation	0.678	0.469	0.634	0.484	0.540

*=p<0.1, **=p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Table 4 shows how students with post-entry postgraduate public sector preference score on the three types of motivations. Clearly, students with public sector employment preference have significantly higher PSM than private sector motivation; PSM and public sector motivation are almost equal. Overall, however, respondents already score highly on PSM and public sector motivation before they start the program, suggesting they get preselected into the MPA based on these motivations. Intriguingly, MPA students do value the items 'being successful' and 'earning a high salary' – traditionally associated with private sector employment, nearly as high, arguably a region-specific finding we will discuss in the next section. In all, they display a public sector ethos and mindset with no reinforcement occurring during the program.

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Table 4: Post-entry motivations of those with public sector preference (n=60)

PSM		Private sector motivation		T-Test
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	P-value
4.427	0.483	3.588	0.424	0.000***
PSM		**Public sector motivation**		**T-test**
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
4.427	0.424	4.408	0.439	0.607

*=p<0.1, **=p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Students speaking out: Pre-entry

We categorized and coded 82 responses to our open survey question "Please describe the reason for your sector preference in one sentence," resulting in five main coding categories which we juxtapose with the preference for employment sector as indicated by the respondents, in Table 5. The numbers between brackets indicate the number of statements corresponding with the particular code, illustrated by one illustrative quote reflecting the overall category.

In many ways, the qualitative survey data corroborate our quantitative data. Particularly, those who justify and explain their preferred employment sector by "wanting to work in service of others" and "making great impact" often see themselves working in the non-profit sector, next to the public sector (none of the sector justifications of those with private sector preferences could be coded into these categories). In the end, job content, career opportunities and self-development, and fit with the sector – or sometimes, lack of fit resulting in desire for a sector switch – and serving others or "society," are the most dominant categories.

Students speaking out: Post-entry

Here, we coded 76 responses to our open question using the same categories as before. Compared to pre-entry responses, more students make reference to career opportunities and the content of the job with 'serving the nation' and 'fit with sector' becoming much less prominent. As shown before, a small portion of students change their sector preference from public to

private; preference for non-profit employment remains equal. Also, fit with sector goes down as a justification among all students, regardless of preference. This shows students do open up to the possibility of other sectors and careers during the program. Private sector preference, going up slightly as indicated before, is explained by having more dynamic and faster career and growth opportunities, even more so now than at the pre-entry stage.

The number of students expressing preference for postgraduate non-profit employment remains similar but the biggest shift in justifications can be seen from fit with sector to serving others and the nation: in short, classical motivates for government employment go up while sector preference remains stable.

Pre-entry focus groups

We conducted seven pre-entry focus groups with 26 survey respondents to tease out more in-depth key survey topics in a safe and collaborative environment (Eliot et al. 2005). Students were selected with backgrounds from all sectors, with the majority being from the public sector. We coded student responses on two main issues: 1) views on the public and private sector based on their own experiences, and 2) reasons for choosing this degree (shown in Table 6). The numbers between brackets indicate the number of statements corresponding with the particular code.

TABLE 5: Sector of Post-Graduate Employment Preference Explained (Pre-Entry vs. Post-Entry)

SECTOR	1. Job content, career opportunities, personal growth		2. Being of service to others		3. To serve the nation		4. Fit with industry/sector		5. Making greater impact	
	Pre-entry:26	Post-entry:36	Pre-entry:10	Post-entry:11	Pre-entry:7	Post-entry:5	Pre-entry:30	Post-entry:14	Pre-entry:9	Post-entry:10
PUBLIC Pre-entry:52 Post-entry:47	"I value performance and result more than salary". 13	"It provides an optimal balance of my preferred job nature, work scope, employment security and reasonable remuneration" 20	"I think this gives most scope for creating the environment for others to flourish". 9	"Giving back to the community that has served me well". 8	"My country needs to build public sector capacity". 7	"Public sector in my country is weak which needs more attention". 4	"Familiarity with the process and system it works". 16	"I have a good experience in public sector; the public policy course learnings would help me in working better in the same sector". 9	"Provides me the opportunity to not stop at advocacy but also implement". 7	"Public sector can change larger and more fundamental issues than private sector". 6
NON-PROFIT Pre-entry:16 Post-entry:13	"Diversity in careers". 4	"More international, more diverse". 4	"Can contribute directly to the society". 1	"Apply what I have learnt and contribute to the community". 3	 0	"Public participation seems to be the only way of moving forward in a democratic setup". 1	"I relate to it the most". 9	"Have good experiences and understanding of this sector". 2	"I think it is the sector where I can have most impact". 2	"In an NGO I wish to bridge gap in trust deficit between government and private sector". 3
PRIVATE Pre-entry:14 Post-entry:16	"I want to experience a more competitive working environment". 9	"Business sector makes people grow faster". 13	 0	 0	 0	 0	"Private sector dynamics are more close to my personality". 5	"My domain of work is only in private sector". 2	 0	"I am able to contribute more through private perspectives". 1

The focus group results *complement* our survey findings in two ways. First, students are at least as critical of the public sector as the private sector (the number of negative public sector views even exceeds the number for the private sector). Second, the vast majority of statements on motives for choosing an MPA degree emphasize upgrading of skills and capabilities, and increasing career opportunities rather than expressing a particular passion for public service.

Table 6:   Codes responses to pre-entry focus groups (n=26)

	1. **Views on Private Sector**	2. **Views on Public Sector**	3. **Why Choose MPA?**
Pre-entry focus groups	*[Positive (11)]*: More prestige, meritocracy and awarded performance.	*[Positive (4)]*: The right place for advancing public agendas and achieving public impact.	Looking for skills upgrading and problem solving capabilities to increase career opportunities. *(14)*
	[Negative (8)]: Competition and complexity can lead to overload and burnout, and business sector has questionable ethics.	*[Negative (11)]*: Public sector is ineffective, inefficient, corrupt, dominated by relationships, and not accountable.	To elevate standing and gain promotion within current job. *(8)*
			Did not have the background or means to seek an MBA. *(2)*

Post-entry exit interviews

In addition, we conducted 10 exit interviews with students right after they completed the post-entry survey, about a week before graduation. In the exit interviews we asked the students what they took away from their degree program in relation to their initial expectations, whether the MPA experience changed their outlook on policy issues and sectors, and how that may affect their postgraduate sector of employment preference.

The interview data displayed in Table 7 add three intriguing flavors to the previous findings. First of all, it now becomes clear that MPA students are indeed passionate about creating public value but *they do not necessarily view public sector employment as the proper or even most effective vehicle to do so*. Second, a related sentiment expressed by some students is that of private and social enterprise being more capable of facilitating such pursuits as they

value initiative, assess performance based on merit, and allow more individual impact. Third, however, students overall feel enriched and better prepared to pursue their ambitions.

Table 7:   Post-entry exit interviews (n=10)

	What are your key take-aways?	**Were expectations met fully?**	**How do you view policy issues and sectors now?**	**How does this affect your preferred sector of employment choice?**
Post-entry exit interviews	"Many skills were honed but most valuable were the discussions with other students about ethics and morality". "Discussions reach a level of depth that MBA programs cannot match; their students are thinking about where to make money next".	*[Fully (5)]* "Yes, I have changed and grown significantly".	"It has further sparked my interest in and passions for development work". "I have never come out of any class discussion biased towards one sector or another. I have come to believe though that the impact you can make is smaller in larger institutions".	*[Affected (6)]* "I want to pursue gender and development issues like before but not necessarily in the public sector". "I see a lot of potential in creating social innovation outside the usual public sector institutions".
		[Partly (5)] "Overall yes, but it could have been much more rigorous".		*[Not affected (4)]* "It hasn't changed. I was in a social enterprise before enrolling here and I want to go back to social enterprise even more now". "I was in government and still want to work in government, because I care about environmental and economic issues and government has the most impact there".

DISCUSSION

Based on our overall findings, we can only partly accept hypothesis 1: public sector professionals do indeed enter the program with higher levels of PSM but with slightly less appreciation of public sector values than those with other professional backgrounds. Our findings do, however, convincingly support hypothesis 2; students with public sector backgrounds are significantly more likely to go back to the public sector than those with other backgrounds at the moment of entry, confirming socialization effects (Bright 2005; Camilleri

2007; Moynihan and Pandey 2007; Ritz et al. 2016). However, the public sector preference at the moment of exit goes down for both groups, particularly for the non-public sector professionals. This finding challenges somewhat the mission of Public Policy schools to enhance or reinforce a love for public service.

Contrary to what we expected based on most other studies (Kennedy and Maletesta 2010; Rose 2013; Stuteville and DiPaova-Stocks 2011; omitted), values and motivations positively associated with public sector employment overall remained stable or went down over the course of the degree program. Thus, we have to reject hypotheses 3 and 4. At the same time, baseline levels were fairly high to start with, corroborating earlier findings about public service minded students being selected into programs preparing them for public service careers (Kjeldsen 2012; Kjeldsen and Jacobsen 2013).

As expected, though, given the nature of the program a large majority of students still prefers public sector employment upon graduation, leading us to confirm hypothesis 6. Such preference also correlates significantly with positive public sector perceptions, confirming hypothesis 8. However, as both the percentage of students preferring public sector employment as well as the overall positive perception of public sector life slightly decrease during the program, we have to reject hypotheses 5 and 7.

Hypotheses 9 is wholeheartedly supported by our findings: those preferring postgraduate public sector employment at the moment of graduation have significantly higher levels of PSM than private sector motivations. We have to reject hypothesis 10, as students preferring public sector employment report more or less similar levels of PSM and public sector motivation. This finding suggests more research is needed into how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations combine and compete (Chen and Hsieh 2014; Infeld et al. 2009, 2010, 2011; omitted Perry and Liu 2014), how public sector motivation needs to be measured (given the low reliability scores of our variable), and how both types of motivators make up a complex mix that drives future

public leaders, progressing as their careers evolve (Van der Wal 2017b).

On a broader note, our findings on dynamics in sector preferences and motivational profiles in relation to sectoral aspirations align with dynamics in how careers develop; from traditional, linear careers within few organizations to boundaryless and self-directed careers characterized by a greater number of job and organization changes (Lyons et *al*. 2012, 2015; Briscoe 2006; Parry et *al*. 2012). Indeed, younger generations in different parts of the world display increasingly *protean* career orientations with a desire for interesting and meaningful work, personal growth, developing new skills, and high materialistic rewards rather than a specific sector preference (Ng et *al*. 2010; Schultz 2016; Tschirhart et *al*. 2008; Twenge and Kasser 2013; Van der Wal 2015). As said, these developments pose questions to Public Policy schools about how 'sector-specific' their degree programs and desired graduates should be, and whether sector-specificity is at all realistic and desirable in the years to come. Protean career dynamics will also lead to increased "sector switching" (De Graaf and Van der Wal 2008; Hansen 2014; Johnson and Ng 2015; Su and Bozeman 2009)

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Here, we shortly discuss three key limitations and their implications for future research. First of all, given the small size of our sample it is obvious we cannot simply generalize our results to the 22 countries making up the continent Asia, with their widely different political histories and cultures, religions, and demographics. If only, our results may speak for China, India, and ASEAN, in particular Singapore and Indonesia (cf. omitted). Second, a related concern is that the public sectors of some Asian countries suffer from corruption and cronyism (Christie et al. 2003), while Singapore is in many ways the exact opposite (Quah 2011). This may affect students' perceptions about government capacity in these countries. However, our sample size and research aims do not allow for a rigorous between-country comparison at this stage.

Follow-up studies with much larger samples from more countries in the region are needed here. Still, Singaporean respondents did not diverge widely from the other respondents in their responses.

Third and final, the long term effects of a degree program on deeply held attitudes and perceptions may only surface after a few years and a renewed experience of working in (the same) agency and sector. Perhaps a year is simply too short a period of time for any effects to really take hold. Currently, we are working on longitudinal data collection mechanisms allowing us to collect data up to two years after students finish their program. With such data we can better establish both the long term effect of the degree as well as a potential 'shock effect' of postgraduate employment (cf. Blau 1960; Kjeldsen and Jacobsen 2013). In addition, they allow us to empirically map the frequency of postgraduate sector switching.

On a more general note, future studies should use with caution research concepts and instruments devised in Western contexts such as PSM to study Asian contexts, and construct new variables, scales, and measures to study phenomena in this region (cf. Van der Wal 2015).

CONCLUSION

We commenced our research with the following research question: *How and why do pre-entry and post-entry personal values, job motivations, sector perceptions, and career preferences of MPA students in Asia differ?* Our data show that our respondents enter their MPA program with a strong public sector related motivational profile, appreciation of personal values associated with public sector employment, and largely positive perceptions towards working life in the public sector. Around 70 percent has a professional background in the public sector and around 67 percent prefers to go back there after spending their year in graduate school. However, it is also clear MPA students are not uniform in their preferred sector of employment, making it

hard to label them "future government leaders".[2]

Intriguingly, by the time students finish their MPA program their public sector related values, motivations, and perceptions have slightly decreased, and some of the students who initially preferred public sector employment switch to a preference for business. This finding may worry Public Policy schools engaged in debates on whether they do an adequate job of producing graduates with a strong public service ethos and a preference for public service. At the same time, students aspire careers characterized by public value creation, just not necessarily through government employment. Lastly, there are stark differences between students who come from the public sector and those who don't: the former have a stronger overall public sector-oriented profile. Clearly, socialization by sector trumps socialization by degree program.

In addition, many students are fairly critical of government's capacity to tackle social issues and pursue public values, and its ability to enact meritocracy and incorruptibility. This finding in particular differentiates our respondents from their Western peers and points at a somewhat cynical or perhaps merely realistic view of public sector capabilities in many Asian countries (cf. Pandey and Jain 2014; omitted). If and how their MPA enrollment corroborated or even enforced such views is an intriguing question that merits further study.

We conclude with four key take-aways on the effects of MPA education on the attitudes and perceptions of our respondents:

1. Professional MPA students in our study are critical, or at the very least realistic about the capabilities and abilities of public sectors in the region; yet, the majority of them still choose to go back to public sector employment when they graduate, driven by a mix of public service motivation and public sector motivation;

2. Taking a 1-year MPA program did not enhance values, motivations, and perceptions

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[2] More in general, a one-on-one relationship between study and career choice (and the expected preferences of the (future) employer) is increasingly and repeatedly questioned by former students; see for instance the online forum "MPA vs. MBA" at: http://forums.degreeinfo.com/archive/index.php/t-11244.html).

positively associated with the public sector nor preference for public sector employment; on the contrary, most of these indicators went down slightly;

3. Such decrease could even be observed for MPA students with a professional public sector past. Public servants, however, display significantly higher levels of PSM compared to MPA students with private sector and non-profit backgrounds, and a significantly higher preference for postgraduate public sector employment, pre-entry as well as post-entry;

4. Overall, the vast majority of our respondents expressed great passion towards creating public value and impact through their careers; however, many of them simply do not view the public sector as the exclusive or even the best place to do so. So, even though *ethos is hardly reinforced nor government unanimously endorsed*, many future MPA students will spend the rest of their working lives contributing to their societies by addressing key policy challenges in their respective countries.

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APPENDIX 1: Descriptives of all items

Work Motivations	T=0				T=1			
	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Min	Max.	Mean	SD
Being Successful	1	5	4.31	0.712	1	5	4.32	0.694
Contributing to Society	1	5	4.60	0.553	1	5	4.49	0.583
A High Salary	1	5	3.80	0.786	1	5	3.96	0.588
Being service oriented to others	1	5	4.03	0.822	1	5	4.01	0.840
Intellectually stimulating work Environment	1	5	4.56	0.558	1	5	4.57	0.559
Total commitment to my employer	1	5	3.91	0.902	1	5	3.85	0.859
Balancing work and family obligations	1	5	4.58	0.674	1	5	4.47	0.669
Meaningful public service is very important to me	1	5	4.55	0.629	1	5	4.61	0.552
My career will be more important after graduation	1	5	2.40	0.986	1	5	2.57	1.107
Welfare of others is important to me	1	5	4.20	0.687	1	5	4.17	0.686
I like to create innovative products and services	1	5	4.12	0.794	1	5	4.27	0.678
Its best when the public sector is responsible for public goods	1	5	4.01	0.979	1	5	3.87	0.958
Its best when the market is given maximum freedom	1	5	2.99	0.984	1	5	2.90	0.979

Sector Perceptions								
	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
"In general, government is very bureaucratic."	1	5	4.07	0.718	1	5	4.13	0.801
"In general, business works much more efficiently and effectively than government."	1	5	3.58	0.929	1	5	3.71	0.967
"When you are working in the business sector, you are only concerned with your own benefits and that of your company."	1	5	3.42	1.130	1	5	3.55	1.073
"Those choosing a career in government are often less ambitious than those choosing a career in business."	1	5	2.54	1.045	1	5	2.73	1.149
"In the business sector it is easier to get promoted to a better position."	1	5	3.19	1.029	1	5	3.2	0.997
"In the business sector, there is a lot of competitiveness between colleagues."	1	5	4.02	0.725	1	5	3.96	0.721
"When you work for government, you are often caught in a web of political interests."	1	5	3.91	0.919	1	5	4.02	0.798
"When you work for government, you can contribute positively to society."	1	5	4.07	0.824	1	5	4.02	0.766
"Government is much friendlier working environment than business."	1	5	3.13	0.914	1	5	3.12	0.942
"In the business sector, people often play 'dirty games' to maximize profit."	1	5	3.48	0.951	1	5	3.49	0.892

Personal Values								
	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Fun	1	10	7.38	2.074	1	10	7.39	1.989
Achievement	1	10	8.34	1.734	1	10	8.63	1.627
Equality	2	10	8.41	1.645	1	10	7.78	2.431
Peace	2	10	8.54	1.628	1	10	7.90	2.132
Prosperity	1	10	7.83	1.715	1	10	7.71	1.827
Change	1	10	7.29	1.978	1	10	7.30	2.089
Power	1	10	6.72	2.343	1	10	6.99	2.068
Self-Sacrifice	1	10	6.59	2.106	1	10	6.40	2.383
Justice	1	10	8.33	2.141	1	10	8.14	2.009
Charity	1	10	7.09	2.174	1	10	6.42	2.235