

JOB SECTOR CHOICE AND PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION:  
EVIDENCE FROM COLOMBIA

By

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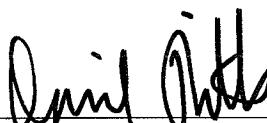
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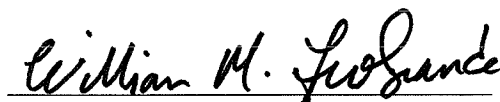
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In loving memory of my sister,  
Gloria Yamile Sanabria Pulido.  
The most beautiful person I ever met.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Public administration scholarship has yet to explore the relationship between job sector choice and public service motivation in developing countries. My dissertation aims to contribute to the field by investigating the factors that explain job sector decisions among highly skilled individuals through focusing on a sample of Colombian citizens who have pursued education abroad. More specifically, I draw on the fields of job sector choice and public service motivation to identify, both quantitatively and qualitatively, factors affecting the job sector decisions of internationally educated Colombians. I answer my research questions through an analysis of quantitative data gathered from the Colombian international scholarship program Colfuturo, and also through an analysis of qualitative data gathered from interviews with highly skilled individuals working in various sectors. The main conclusion reached is that the Colombian public sector remains an attractive employer, especially within certain groups of the population. However, other groups remain doubtful about accepting a public sector job. The Colombian government still has to adjust its recruitment strategies in terms of, among other things, salaries, duration of contracts, open access and transparency. Crucially, the results collected raise an important question concerning what the Colombian government should do, that is, whether it should facilitate access to government jobs for captive groups or, instead, attract qualified individuals currently working in other sectors. According to the quantitative and qualitative evidence provided herein, the answer is that both strategies are necessary if the Colombian

government wants to increase its critical mass of highly qualified people, particularly within the upper echelons of government.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY**

In this dissertation I analyze the interaction between job sector choice and public service motivation (PSM) in Colombia. In order to do so I analyze both quantitatively and qualitatively the determinants of job sector choice within a group of highly qualified Colombian individuals. The results of this work aim to first, inform human resources practices where the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer of choice in Colombia is concerned and second, help advance empirical research into human management capital in Latin American and other developing countries.

A group of practitioners and various scholars from developed countries have argued that their governments have lost their ability to attract employees due to efficiency-oriented public sector reforms. They assert that thanks to such reforms other sectors are today more able to attract the most talented employees available. Alternatively, empirical studies undertaken within public administration scholarship have provided quantitative evidence confirming that in response to societal changes individuals are now more willing to switch jobs and are less attached to a particular sector or job. However, the evolution of the ability of the public sector to attract talented workers has been less well analyzed within the context of developing countries. Overall, there exists less extensive empirical research concerning job sector choices and public sector employment in countries where civil services are still under construction, such as those in Latin America.

Accordingly, the problem that this dissertation addresses is the lack of empirical evidence concerning job sector choice and public sector attractiveness in developing countries. Who wants to work for the government in a developing country like Colombia? What are the determinants of

job sector choice? Developing countries usually face stringent conditions and lack the administrative and institutional resources required for configuring professional civil services. It therefore makes sense to analyze whether people are attracted to public sector jobs or not within developing countries. Consequently, I aim to analyze job sector choices in Colombia not only to reduce the paucity of empirical research particularly evident in the case of Latin America, but also to analyze the determinants of public sector attractiveness in an as yet unexplored context.

In doing so I aim to contribute to the discipline by helping to expand the literature regarding job sector choice and public service motivation by introducing research from a developing country. I also hope to open the door for future empirical studies regarding human resources policies and public administration strategies in Colombia. Additionally, my research aspires to offer information that can be used to improve human resources policies concerned with the attraction, recruitment and retention of public managers and highly skilled public officials within the public sector in Colombia.

This chapter elucidates the problem that motivates this dissertation and the general framework for my research. In the first section of this chapter I analyze different views about the state of public sector employment following various attempts at state reform. I explore the problem of employment within the context of developed countries and then move onto literature concerned with the same problem within the context of developing countries. Finally, I analyze the current situation in Latin America and, more specifically, the Republic of Colombia, which lies in the north of South America.

In the following subsection I explain the context of the study. I identify the main data sources for my research and provide additional descriptive information about the samples used for both the qualitative and quantitative analyses. Next I pinpoint the four research questions that

motivate and guide this research and finally, in the last section, I explain the contribution my research makes to the field of public administration scholarship in theoretical, methodological and practical terms.

## **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

### **1.1.1 Public Sector as Employer of Choice**

In 1989 the Volcker commission argued that in the United States the government was no longer considered an attractive employer, a situation they identified as resulting from increasing competition for human talent across different sectors. Although some empirical studies have contradicted some of the premises of the Volcker Commission, one of its most renowned members, Professor Paul Light of New York University, argued in 1999 that, “the quiet crisis [in public service] continues” (1999, p. 4). In fact, fourteen years later the Volcker Commission updated its 1989 claims and argued that the erosion of employees in the public service had continued and was rapidly worsening.

Similar claims have been made regarding the employment abilities of the public sector in other developed countries. Two studies by the European Institute of Public Administration – EIPA (2002, 2003) – argued that the aggregate effect of socio-demographic changes, poor economic performance and managerial reforms worked to undermine the attractiveness of European governments as the employers of choice. Christensen & Laegreid (1999) and Äijälä (2001) made similar claims about the poor evolution of public sector employment in Europe.

Different studies contend that public sector employment has deteriorated, arguing in general that this is the result of efficiency-oriented reforms implemented during the 1980s and 1990s. According to some public administration scholars, such reforms elicited recruitment and retention challenges for government agencies around the world (Light, 1999; Denhardt &



Denhardt, 2000). Other authors have illustrated how the reforms aimed to restructure public sector employment and reduce bureaucracy within the management of public sector organizations (Christensen & Laegreid, 1999; Klitgaard, 1997; Peters & Savoie, 1994; Polidano 2001; Terry, 2005).

Other scholars focus on the effects of state reform on the attraction and retention of public sector workers (Light, 2007; Peters & Savoie, 1994; Terry, 2005). According to Light, this is a problem that has grown more serious due to competition from other sectors for the most talented employees available, a battle that the government has been losing (1999, p. 3). Employment reforms in the public sector, in Light's view, have generated a growing inability for the government to attract valuable human capital due to the offering of unchallenging, static and unpromising public sector jobs. This comes at a time of change for the work preferences of individuals, especially as young people are now seeking rewarding experiences in employment, are less willing to stay in the same place for long periods of time, and are more willing to switch sector (1999, p. 84).

Is there any evidence that such a phenomenon is taking place? Is the government less frequently chosen as an employer by current workers? Is it possible that such patterns reflect societal changes in both the conditions under which workers are employed and the way workers choose their employers? Most of the aforementioned studies did not offer empirical evidence as to how and why the government was chosen by potential workers. However, empirical studies (Crewson, 1995, 1997) that have analyzed job sector choice and switching between sectors (using quantitative methods) have provided some elements for just such an analysis, actually contradicting the "quiet crisis" argument in government employment. By analyzing the

determinants of job sector choice these studies provide a picture of the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer of choice in comparison with other sectors.

An increasing number of authors have statistically analyzed the determinants of sector choices: Blank (1985), Lewis and Frank (2002), Christensen and Wright (2009), Vandenabeele (2008), Christensen and Wright (2010). Other scholars have focused on analyzing the patterns of sector switching among workers: Leisink and Steijn (2008), Steijn (2008), Sue and Bozeman (2009a, 2009b). While such studies have confirmed that individuals are now more willing to switch jobs and less attached to a particular sector or job, studies into job sector choice have identified concrete elements and traits that operate as employee attractors within the public sector (and other sectors). Overall, these studies do not necessarily confirm that the public sector has lost its comparative advantage in attracting and retaining workers. In fact, according to their results the government appears still to be an attractive employer for certain individuals.

However, most of these empirical studies have focused on the United States and various European countries. There exists little empirical evidence regarding employment attractiveness and job sector choice in other settings. Indeed, similar to the “quiet crisis trend” identified by authors in developed countries, several studies have described the problems of underdeveloped civil services in less advanced nations. However, studies still neglect to thoroughly explore and explain the mechanisms through which some individuals become more, or less, attracted to government jobs in comparison to other sectors in, for instance, Latin American countries. This lack appears to be an indication of a need to undertake empirical research into job sector choice in those countries.

In the next section I explore some studies that describe the problems associated with the civil services in developing countries, aiming to link them with questions regarding the

attractiveness of the public sector as an employer of choice in those governments. This review will allow me to reveal the absence of studies regarding job sector choice and public sector attractiveness within the context of developing countries such as Colombia, which is the central point of analysis for this dissertation.

### **1.1.2 Analysis of Public Sector Choice and Attractiveness in Developing Countries**

Generally speaking, literature on job sector choice in developing countries is scarce. Most literature regarding public sector employment relies on descriptive accounts rather than empirical analyses of public sector employment and public sector choice. For instance, literature on civil services in developing countries is especially abundant regarding characterizations of the shortcomings of civil service systems in developing countries. Moreover, such literature is less focused on analyzing the employment capabilities of governments in these countries than describing the issues that differentiate them from the "more developed" systems of developed countries. Among the elements frequently mentioned in the literature are: Absence of merit, political patronage and patrimonialism (Nunberg, 1995; Olowu, 1999), lack of information systems (Olowu, 1999), non-binding systems of employee evaluations (Klitgaard, 1997; Nunberg, 1995), promotion systems based on seniority rather than performance (Klitgaard, 1997; Nunberg, 1995), shortage of skilled employees (Olowu, 1999; Shihata, 1995), excessive rules and poor enforcement ability (Kearney & Hays, 1998; Polidano, 2001; Reid & Scott, 1995), low pay (Reid & Scott, 1995; Reid, 1992), citizen distrust and discontent (Peters & Savoie, 1994). Still, there aren't any empirical studies that look at the determinants involved in choosing a public sector job in developing countries.

Initial studies aimed to either describe the effects of efficiency-oriented reforms or enhance processes of institutional reform mainly through prescription. In fact, most of these

descriptive (and prescriptive) works were conducted with the support of multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, as part of reform efforts that changed the focus from efficiency concerns in the 1980s to performance issues in the 1990s. Therefore, it is not only a lack of empirical evidence that affects the analysis of public sector employment in these countries, but the questionable utility of comparing underdeveloped civil services with civil services functioning within very different institutional frameworks. The strong focus of such studies probably reduced interest in analyzing the particularities of the civil services of the region and the specificities involved in the mechanisms of public sector employment within such contexts.

Although in scope and success structural adjustment programs have affected the attractiveness of the government as employer (considering their effectiveness in the reduction of the size of the state), few studies provide empirical evidence of such a phenomenon. However, some of these studies express a genuine concern with public sector employment issues. For instance, some of the literature argues that state reform did not necessarily improve the capacity of the civil service and its employment abilities in developing countries (Olowu, 1997; Polidano, 2001). Klitgaard (1997) argues that most of these efforts were able only to reduce, in the most successful cases, the size of the civil service rather than improve its ability to operate better. Caiden (1991) contends that structural reforms did not improve the functioning of the public sector in developed countries; instead their negative impact on government capability was greater (Caiden, 1991). In fact, these studies share the idea that strategies for improving civil service capacities in the public sector were absent from the reform efforts.

Although my study does not pretend to evaluate the effect of state reforms on public sector employment, it does aim to offer an analysis of the current ability of the government as an

employer by analyzing who is attracted to working in the public sector (or other sectors) in a developing country and why. This is a relevant issue in light of the fact that if the public sector has lost its allure as an employer in developing countries, then this can have negative consequences on the government's capacity to deliver effective public services (Durant et al., 2009; Terry, 2005). In fact, considering the demanding context of developing societies, these effects can become more severe as societal challenges increase in complexity and demand better skilled and more accountable public bureaucracies (Meier & Hill, 2005; Olsen, 2005). Therefore, in order to study public employment in developing countries and reduce the paucity of empirical research, as is particularly evident in the case of Latin America, I aim to analyze job sector choices in Colombia.

Similar to the previously mentioned literature from other developing countries, the literature focusing on Latin America places emphasis on explaining the divergence of Latin American civil services from the ideal of developed civil services, rather than on understanding the processes of public sector employment in such a context. The literature has been highly descriptive of the civil service problem. Zuvanic and Iacovello (2010) illuminate the low level of professionalization present in public bureaucracies and the persistence of political patronage and clientelism in Latin America. Longo (2003b) describes systems in the region as afflicted by over-regulation, low mobility of workers, complex and overly formalized recruitment processes, excess job security, and seniority-based promotion. Other descriptive literature shares a similar view regarding the weaknesses of the state and civil services in the region: Carlson and Payne (2003), CLAD (2003), Echebarría (2003, 2006), Longo (2003a, 2006), Oszlak (2003) Portes and Smith (2008), Ramió and Salvador (2008), Scartascini, Stein and Tommasi (2010). However, empirical literature explaining causality and effects are harder to find.

The idea of a decline or erosion in the employment abilities of the government has also taken place in the Latin American case, again without supporting empirical evidence. Some authors argue that rather than correcting the drawbacks of bureaucracies, civil service reform processes in Latin America misdiagnosed the problem (Peters & Savoie, 1994) and ended up diminishing the state's own institutional and administrative abilities. Longo (2003b) claims that most Latin American countries have struggled to keep their civil services small while at the same time adopting measures to improve the capacity of the government in order to develop more professional, merit-based civil services. Beyond this and even after the reforms, the traditional problems affecting civil services in the region (for example, political interference, low pay, nepotism and cronyism) are still present and affect its attractiveness (Echebarría, 2003, 2006; Carlson & Payne, 2003).

Still, very few authors have explored, even from a descriptive perspective, the phenomenon of public sector choice. Naim (1994) describes how the state has had a natural ability to attract some talented workers to the “easier jobs” in the region, but has traditionally been less able to make attractive those jobs that are more complex and which require more skills and greater abilities. In fact, he has provided a comprehensive essay of the contradictions within Latin American civil services, but again, without supporting quantitative or qualitative evidence.

This lack of empirical analysis regarding job sector choice and public sector employment makes it of great importance that the mechanisms of public sector employment and attractiveness are studied in a context that has so far been unexplored. Since most empirical studies regarding job sector choice have concentrated on developed countries, the lack of evidence regarding these issues in countries with demanding public agendas can be costly, both in terms of theory and

practice. This reflects the problem that provides the origin of my dissertation: The lack of empirical evidence on job sector choice and public sector attractiveness in developing countries.

Accordingly, such a problem has two different dimensions, one related to scholarship and a second one related to practice. First, different authors have argued that erosion exists in the employment capabilities of the public sector. However, most of them have not provided empirical evidence of such a phenomenon, especially in developing countries. Second, if empirical evidence does exist to show that the public sector is more or less attractive than other sectors of employment, what are the practical implications of this? How can the public sector be a more attractive option for employment in developing countries? How can the public sector attract highly qualified people? I aim to explore these issues within the context of Colombia, a Latin American developing country affected by stringent social problems about which very little scholarship into public sector choice has been undertaken.

### **1.1.3 Overview of the Colombian Government and Public Administration**

Colombia is a centralized, presidential and democratic republic (Polity Score of 7, Marshall & Jaggers, 2010). It obtained its independence from Spain in 1810 and is located in the Northwest corner of South America<sup>1</sup>. It has a total population of 45 million people, making it the third most populated country in Latin America after Mexico and Brazil. In economic terms, Colombia's GDP in 2010 was \$435.4 billion, making it the 29<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world and the 4<sup>th</sup> in Latin America. The GDP per capita of Colombia in 2011 was \$9,800. Historically, the Colombian economy has enjoyed a long trend of positive growth, only interrupted in 1999 by the financial crisis, which represented the only negative yearly growth rate for the country since the Great Depression in 1929.

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<sup>1</sup> The political and economic data is obtained from CIA World Fact book. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/co.html> Accessed October 15, 2011.

In political terms and contrary to the history of most Latin American countries, Colombia has enjoyed a long tradition of civility with two unusually short periods of military government. In 1991 the political constitution was issued, with several amendments having been made since then. There is a multiparty system, which evolved from the two traditional parties: Liberal and Conservative. In Colombia there exists a separation of powers. The president is the head of the state, the head of government and the head of the executive branch. The president is elected for a term of four years and can only be reelected for one additional term of four years. The legislative branch comprises two chambers: The Senate (102 elected members) and the House of Representatives (166 elected members). The judiciary branch comprises three high courts: The Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of Justice and the Council of the State (UN-DPADM, 2007).

Despite this environment of relative political and economic stability, the Colombian government has critical problems with regards to the public agenda in terms of security and social issues. First, Colombia has been afflicted since the middle of the twentieth century by a long lasting internal conflict with leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary movements, which has been an enormous cost in terms of both lives and productivity. Second, the country is the locus of an entrenched drug production and trafficking industry that has developed strong ties with the aforementioned illegal and armed actors. The State Fragility Index puts Colombia as the second most fragile state in the Americas only after Haiti (Marshall & Cole, 2011). Third, the performance of Colombia in social terms has been extremely modest: 45.5% of Colombia's population lives under the poverty line and it remains the most unequal country in Latin America after Haiti (Gini coefficient 55.9 in 2010) and the eighth most unequal country in the world. Such



statistics and issues make evident the need to configure a highly qualified civil service, an enterprise that historically has consistently failed.

The president, the vice president, and the members of the cabinet (the ministers, as well as the directors of the so called administrative departments) compose the Executive Branch of the Central Power in Colombia. This branch is divided into three levels of territorial government: National, departmental (state level) and municipal. The national level of Colombian public administration includes sixteen ministries, six administrative departments, eleven superintendencies, and seven administrative units, which when added to the rest of the autonomous and attached agencies totals approximately 230 public agencies within the executive branch (IADB, 2004; Contraloría General de la República, 2007).

Chapter II of the Constitution defines the main standards of Colombia's public administration. It establishes general determinations regarding aspects such as the responsibilities and limitations of public officials and public servants, describes the main features of the career system, the role of merit in recruitment and promotion and the main reasons for dismissal. It also established the creation of the National Civil Service Commission (CNSC), which is in charge of managing and overseeing the career system.

The history of the Colombian civil service does not differ greatly from the narrative already given concerning reforms in Latin America. Since 1938 Colombia has made several normative efforts to consolidate the civil service on a basis of merit and professionalization, with most of these efforts being highly ineffective (Sanabria, 2010). In fact, Global Integrity indicators *de jure* and *de facto* evidence a gap between the law and its implementation, something that now characterizes the Colombian civil service. The average *de jure* indicator reaches 75% (the maximum score) while the *de facto* indicator is only 55.6%.

Moreover, the Colombian civil service has been at the forefront of political conflict within the country. Turmoil and violence initially characterized the evolution of Colombia's civil service. According to Bushnell (2007), this period of Colombian history (known as "La Violencia" and which provided the origins for the later guerrilla movement) was marked by violent clashes between liberals and conservatives over, among other reasons, the allocation of public jobs and control of the government payroll. Since political patronage was common practice, each party developed ferocious strategies for ensuring control of the government through the appointment of public servants across the country. This process was costly for the development of the country, since public administration had to start over again every time there was a change of government. Clashes ended with thanks to a bipartisan agreement in which the two main parties alternated power over the course of sixteen years. This coincided with the first formal reform efforts for establishing a merit-based civil service. However, those attempts were again unsuccessful.

There is a clear pattern of ambitious normative reform efforts followed by poor implementation in the development of the Colombian civil service (Sanabria, 2010). Indicative of the enormous inability of the state to undertake comprehensive civil service reforms is the fact that between 1950 and 1990 twenty different laws and statutes were issued. Most of these regulatory efforts were based on recommendations from international missions comprising experts hired by the government to help overcome civil service problems, mostly by intending to emulate other countries' systems (those of France and the UK in particular). Nevertheless, the implementation gap persisted and the government, as of today, has not been able to adopt merit-based practices in the recruitment of public officials. As a result, political patronage and

clientelism have survived and now coexist with meritocratic practices, especially at the local level.

Low administrative capacity and the weak political will of successive governments for eradicating political patronage practices appear to be among the main explanations for the systematic failure of civil service reforms. Most previous efforts to adopt meritocratic practices were unable to formalize the system of public officials appointed through patronage, who made up the largest part of the public sector workforce (they were euphemistically denominated “provisional”) (Contraloría General de la República, 2009). Strong pressure from political actors and interest groups hindered the proper implementation of usually flamboyantly enacted laws. Accordingly, the evolution of public sector bureaucracies in Colombia is characterized as a sequence of failed reform efforts during the second half of the twentieth century.

In spite of this, first and second generation reforms undertaken during the 1980s and 1990s showed a more positive evolution. First generation reforms, although not as comprehensive and aggressive as the ones implemented in other Latin American countries, aimed to modestly reduce the number of public agencies and ministries. The Betancourt (1982-1986) and Barco (1986-1990) administrations executed these reform processes mainly in response to fiscal pressures and international economic crisis.

However, the greatest reforms took place during the Gaviria administration (1990-1994). The government undertook comprehensive market oriented reforms in the health and the labor markets, privatized various public utilities companies and sold some public assets. The reform was not ambitious in terms of the civil service. Instead, the government created a significant number of new agencies in response to the enactment of the new constitution in 1991. As a result, the country even saw an increase in public officials and public agencies.

Later reforms have followed the profile of those of the second-generation reforms, especially in terms of receiving loans and technical assistance from multilateral lenders such as the Inter-American Development Bank (2004). In 2002 the Uribe administration (2002-2010) initiated an ambitious process of re-structuring for state institutions. This time the reform agenda received greater support from politicians and was centralized under one office as part of the executive branch: The *Programa de Renovación de la Administración Pública* (PRAP). Initially, the PRAP attempted to reduce the size of the public sector in terms of the number of organizations (it was not as aggressive in terms of number of employees); it merged ministries and public agencies and privatized some others. However, according to their low effectiveness and high social costs, the Santos government has reversed most of those measures. Yet, more positively, the PRAP did encourage the adoption of merit in recruitment and promotion, as well as attempted to enhance the institutional and managerial environment of the civil service system.

This process led to the enactment of Ley 909/2004 (Law 909/2004), which provides the current normative framework for the civil service in Colombia. This law aimed to provide a regulatory basis, for the first time in Colombia, for the undertaking of a massive competitive process of recruitment for almost 120,000 positions in 2005. Although it initially had a promising start (more than 650,000 Colombians registered to participate in the selection process), as of today 82.5% of the slots offered have not been allocated. This happened again due to, among other reasons, political pressures from different political actors, helped this time by some judicial sentences which, on the grounds of due process, hindered the dismissal of those provisional workers who did not pass the competitive entry tests.

There is another feature of the Colombian political regime that has slowed the evolution of the civil service towards merit and professionalism, namely the political decentralization

process that the country went through during the 1990s. As a result of this the implementation of social policies in Colombia, particularly in health and education, was devolved from the central government to the municipalities and *departamentos* (Oszlak, 2003). This procedure has possibly enhanced the already entrenched clientelist practices, especially in regions with low institutional development.

Nevertheless, although the component of merit has been less effective, law 909 and the PRAP itself have perhaps been more successful than any previous effort in defining a formal structure for public personnel policies in Colombia. For instance, it regulated the constitutional provisions regarding the National Commission of the Civil Service as the agency responsible for providing policy guidelines related to the civil service and the administration of the career system, and it strengthened the role of the *Departamento Administrativo de la Función Pública* (DAFP). DAFP is the agency in charge of designing the policies of public personnel management in the Colombian public administration. Still, according to a report by the IADB (2004) the application of modern practices of personnel management, such as the implementation of performance evaluation linked to performance, the creation of an incentives policy, and greater flexibility for work mobility are still in the early stages of development.

#### **1.1.4 Profile of the Colombian Civil Service**

In spite of all the shortcomings mentioned in the last section, Colombia's Civil Service is considered one of the most developed in Latin America in terms of performance (Zuwanic & Iacovello, 2010). It also appears to be a small-sized state according to different indicators. Some facts clearly illustrate this statement. In 2009 there were 1,014,432 public employees in the national public administration (Contraloría General de la República, 2009), representing 2.25% of the country's population. Total public sector employment in Colombia surpasses only that of

Chile in a sample of 14 Latin American countries, and is well below of the region's average (around 5%) (Echebarría & Cortazar, 2007). Similarly, the payroll as a percentage of GDP is around 7%, and therefore only superior to Peru and Guatemala according to Carlson and Payne (2003).

According to DAFP (2008) the central public administration of the country comprises 53% males and 47% females. In terms of sector, most employees are in Social Protection 20%, Defense 19.05%, Justice 12% and Education 11% (DAFP, 2008). In terms of hierarchical distribution (Table 1), most of the public officials of the central public administration hold assistant and operational positions (61%), 4% are advisors or top managers and 35% of those in leading positions are women. Finally, 59% of the public officials of the central level are over 41 years of age, thus reflecting an aged civil service (all this information comes from DAFP, 2008).

**Table 1. Distribution of Public Officials by Hierarchical Level within Colombia's Central Public Administration**

<b>Distribution by Hierarchical Level</b>	
Directive	2%
Advisor	2%
Executive	1%
Professional	24%
Technician	15%
Assistant	46%
Other	10%

Source: DAFP - Colombia (2008)

The education level of Colombia's public servants is on average low. For instance, 31% of public officials in the central level of Colombian public administration hold university degrees, while only 14% hold postgraduate degrees, which is indicative of the low level of formal training among public workers. In terms of undergraduate degrees, in 13 out of 19 sectors of the central government, the most frequent undergraduate degree among workers is Law. Although there is no information regarding percentages by sector, this predominance reflects the

strong legalistic emphasis of the Colombian public administration. In a similar vein, only 15% of public officials in Colombia's central public administration claim to speak English as a second language.

### **1.1.5 The Colombian Civil Service from a Comparative Perspective**

As I said before, the Colombia's government employment is small in terms of international comparison.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it has diminished from representing 5.3% of the employed population in 2007 to representing only 4.4% in 2010, according to Great Integrated Household Survey of DANE (National Statistics Agency of Colombia). Downsizing also seems to have been successful in relation to number of agencies, which reduced from 297 in 2000 to 229 in 2009 (Contraloría General de la República, 2009). In spite of all the analyzed elements and the small size of the employment of the government, according to Carlson and Payne (2003) the Colombian Public Administration was the second least trusted in Latin America, ahead only of Guatemala.

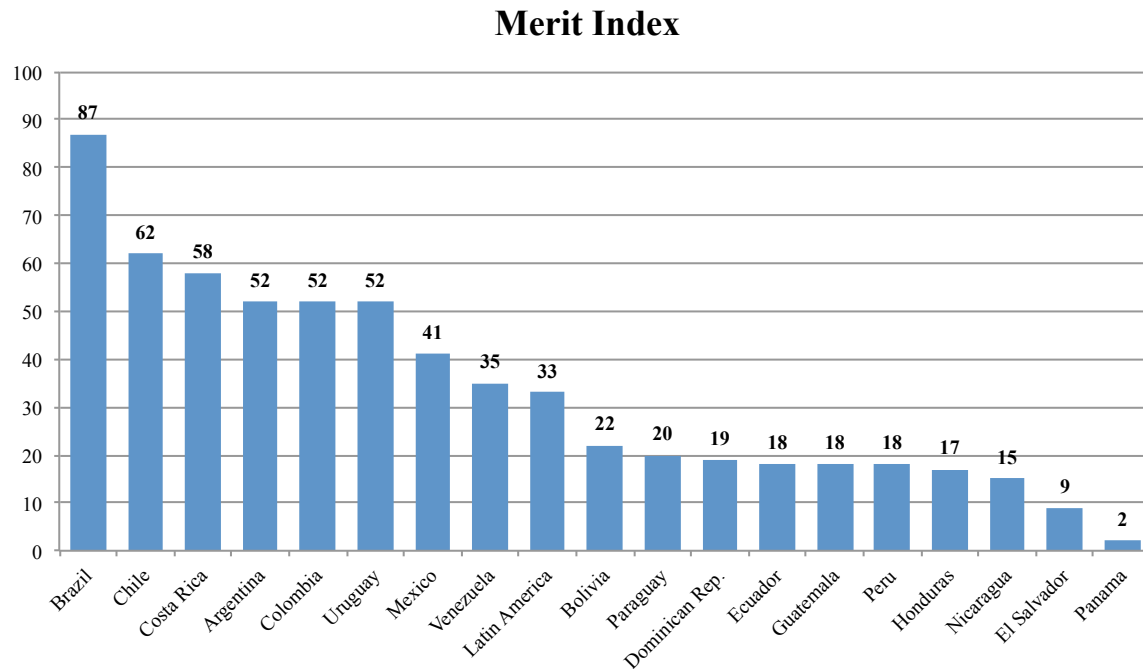
According to a comparative study of the IADB (Longo, 2006; Zuvanic & Iacovello, 2010), the Colombian civil service is ranked fifth in Latin America in terms of efficiency (understood as quality of investments in human capital) among 19 Latin American countries, third in terms of Structural Consistency (strength and systemic integration of the civil service), and fifth in terms of functional capacity (the ability of the system to influence employee behavior). Likewise, it has been ranked fourth in terms of competence and sixth in terms on integrity. In most indicators only Brazil and Chile surpass Colombia, which still ranks more highly than most other Latin American countries. In terms of merit (Figure 1), Colombia ranks fifth and is described as part of a group of countries where political patronage practices coexist

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<sup>2</sup> Similar employment indicator for a sample of Latin American countries in 2007: Colombia 5.4%, Brazil 11%, Mexico 12.1%, Chile 14.6%, Costa Rica 14.5%, Argentina 16.3%, Cuba 81.8%. Source: International Labor Organization – ILO.

with some amount of merit at certain levels and within certain agencies, but is also described as moving towards an increasing adoption of meritocratic practices in recruitment and promotion.

**Figure 1. Merit Index in Latin American Bureaucracies**



Source: Zuvanic and Iacovello (2010)

According to Zuvanic and Iacovello (2010), Colombia has some functional capacity problems in terms of its low ability to eradicate strong internal inequity, and the low competitiveness of salaries especially at the top level. Additionally, salary scales are confusing and there is a multiplicity of additional compensations that further worsen internal equity. Similarly, the authors assert that Colombia has a poor culture of evaluation, since its system of employee assessment operates more as a formality than as a management instrument. As in other Latin American countries, the evaluation system is non-binding and is not attached to non-monetary rewards (promotions, training, professional development). In a similar vein, promotion procedures are still based on seniority and do not encourage higher levels of performance.



However, Zuvanic and Iacovello underscore the strong process of institutionalization of human resources in Colombia as one reason for optimism in the development of its civil service towards professionalization and competence.

Other indicators show the drawbacks of the Colombian civil service. Another study by Iacovello (2006) identifies serious information and organization problems in Colombia's civil service. The government has poor information with regards to who the public officials are and how many of them exist. Likewise, it notes an unusual proliferation of job classifications. This is a problem also mentioned by IADB (2004), which reported the existence of six hierarchical levels, 160 job denominations and 140 salary degrees. According to Iacovello, this multiplicity of classifications has created confusion, inequity and even corruption in the Colombian civil service. Yet, Iacovello does praise the efforts of Law 909/2004 (see Table 2) because, according to her, it provides the framework necessary for improving human resource practices by tackling aspects such as excessive tenure and the lack of flexibility for dismissal, the scarce use of non-monetary incentives, such as awards and public recognition (which are more recommendable than the pecuniary ones in the context of the public sector), the creation of training programs, and other actions, all in order to enhance the professional development of the workforce.

In 2010 the National Statistics office (DANE) conducted the National Survey of Institutional Environment and Performance using a sample of 22,000 public officials. The results showed high levels of satisfaction among Colombian public officials. 98% of public officials surveyed believe their work contributes to the strategic goals of their agencies. Similarly, 95% believe their own work helps to improve the service provided to citizens and users, while 87% believe their work increases their own welfare. When asked about the reasons for staying in their respective agencies, 93% of public officials argued that they stayed because of the opportunity to

gain more experience, while only 52% said they stayed because of professional development and promotion.

**Table 2. Summary of Colombian Civil Service Policies and Practices**

<b>Main Normative Framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Political Constitution, Chapter II, established the guidelines for the actions and patterns of public administration and the Civil Service.</li> <li>- Law 909/2004 regulates public employment, administrative careers and public management.</li> </ul>
<b>Recruitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Political Constitution established the need to set clear functions and job classifications and to undertake competitive processes in all cases except those determined otherwise by the constitution (direct election, political appointments, etc.). Art. 125.</li> <li>- Establishes the creation of a National Civil Service Commission (CNSC) Art. 130, which is in charge of the administration and oversight of administrative careers.</li> <li>- Law 909/2004 regulates public employment, administrative careers and public management and provides functions to the CNSC (Art. 7) and to DAFP (Art. 14).</li> <li>- Law 909 Art. 2 and Art. 28 establish merit as one of the principles of public administration and as the main criteria for the selection of the public workforce.</li> </ul>
<b>Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In practice, this has operated on the basis of seniority, but Law 909 established merit as the main criteria for promotion Art. 28, and stated that all promotions should be assigned through a competitive process. The law does not clearly specify how it is linked, for instance, to performance evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>Training and Professional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Law 909 Art. 36 established that each agency's human resources unit must design training and professional development plans according to its needs. Those plans should consider the participation of the Higher School of Public Administration (ESAP), which is the main educational institution in public administration in the country.</li> </ul>
<b>Personnel Evaluation System</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Law 909/2004 Art. 3 establishes that the evaluation system works on a yearly basis (with two partial evaluations during the year) and should be designed by each agency in relation to respective institutional goals. According to this, the results of evaluation are binding for acquiring career rights, promotion, training and scholarships, and for remaining in the service.</li> </ul>
<b>Tenure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Law 909 Art. 41 establishes traditional grounds for dismissal (end of period for political appointments, negative evaluations, resignation, retirement, etc.) but adds a new motive: "Por razones de buen servicio" or "on good service grounds," which will be justified in critical cases of bad delivery of services by the employee. Art. 42 also establishes the criteria for losing career rights. Art. 44 gives priority for similar jobs in public administration to career officials in cases of downsizing, restructuring or the removal of a position and establishes criteria for severance pay.</li> <li>- Art. 46 establishes criteria for future personnel reforms on the grounds of reorganization or modernization of the administration.</li> </ul>
<b>Senior Executives and Top</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Law 909 Title VIII aims to introduce "Public Management Principles in the Administration." Art. 47 created a new category of jobs identified as "Jobs of a Managerial Nature" or public management jobs.</li> <li>- In this category are included all those that are not matters of presidential</li> </ul>

<b>Management</b>	<p>appointment and some particular categories at the territorial level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Art. 48 and Art. 49. These positions are merit based and are mediated by one criterion of managerial responsibility; the public managers will be evaluated on the grounds of efficiency and efficacy. The program considers the provision of incentives, although it does not clarify what kind of incentives.</li> <li>- Art. 50 Management Agreements. This is probably the main new feature of this new category. According to this, once selected the public manager should establish with her or his superior the goals to be achieved. Both parties will then sign a management agreement. The agreement should contain all the results agreed in terms of quantity and quality and a set of indicators to assess the achievement of those goals. Three months after finishing the period of agreement an evaluation should be conducted.</li> </ul>
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In terms of employment by sector, in this work, besides government, I also analyze the private, the nonprofit and the academic sectors of employment in Colombia. An important number of companies compose the private sector in Colombia. In fact, they employ individuals with the most competitive salaries in the market. Although most of the companies are small and medium enterprises, the larger employers (as a percentage of the labor force) are the biggest companies, which are widespread across most productive sectors but specially in manufacturing, commerce and agroindustry. There are also a significant number of subsidiaries of important multinational companies in sectors such as Mining and Energy, Pharmaceuticals, Retail, and other manufacturing. Individuals with high levels of education, usually international education, are at the higher echelons of both national and multinational companies. The nonprofit sector is small with an important number of international organizations and donors in the country in response to the political conflict and pervasive poverty and inequality that afflict the country. While some of them are competitive employers, most of the organizations in this sector appear not to provide stability and job security due to their strong reliance on international grants and donations. Although salaries are said to be low, the academic job market in Colombia is highly segmented; only those individuals who occupy professorial jobs at top universities receive competitive salaries and stable contracts. Top ranked universities are usually attractive for

individuals with international education, which are highly selective and demanding at composing their faculty.

## **1.2 Context for the Study**

This dissertation focuses on the process of job sector choice within Colombia, a developing country. Civil services in developing countries, as we saw above, have faced processes of steep development and ineffective State reforms. However, there are few empirical studies that analyze the effects of these reforms on public sector employment in Latin American countries and specifically in Colombia. My dissertation aims to contribute to the field by integrating research into job sector choice and public service motivation in order to identify, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the determinants of job sector decisions made by internationally educated individuals in Colombia.

I intend to answer my research questions through an analysis of qualitative data from a sample of internationally educated individuals working in different sectors in Colombia, as well as quantitative data from the Colombian scholarship program, Colfuturo. In 1991 the First Lady of the Republic and a group of leaders from the public and private sectors created Colfuturo to sponsor the international education of Colombian professionals. This took place during a period of aggressive economic and political reform in Colombia. In the same year a progressive constitution was issued in order to replace a conservative charter issued one century earlier. Economic liberalization and trade openness were high on the agenda, and the country aimed at curtailing the guerrilla conflict and the rising trafficking of illegal drugs. In this context, the country demanded highly educated professionals, and since both the president and the first lady were U.S. educated they saw international education as a strategy for enhancing the

competitiveness of the country. Thus Colfuturo was born as a public-private partnership with an initial fund of 12.7 million USD.

Every year Colfuturo awards a select number of loans and scholarships to Colombian professionals to enable them to attend top universities in other countries, the most popular destinations being the U.S., the U.K., Spain, France and Germany. The most frequently attended universities are globally prestigious, including the London School of Economics, Columbia, Harvard, New York University and Politecnico di Milano. Most of the participants enroll in Master's programs, with only about 14% pursuing a Ph.D.

Recipients of Colfuturo receive a financial package that combines a scholarship and a loan to cover expenses abroad. The maximum amount of financial support is 25,000 USD per year for a maximum of two years. Upon completion of the program students have one year to find a job and start repaying the loan. Participants are eligible for a 25 to 50 percent reduction in debt if they meet three conditions: 1) Return to Colombia before an established deadline, 2) successfully complete their degree, and 3) remain in Colombia after their return for a specified length of time. Those who join the public sector or become a member of faculty at a university are eligible for an additional 10% reduction in their loan debt. Those who do not finish their degree and/or do not return to Colombia must repay the total amount of assistance immediately.

Colfuturo has become one of Latin America's largest and most effective scholarship programs for international education. Since its inception in 1992 it has supported more than 4,100 Colombians in pursuing graduate studies abroad. Graduates have become government ministers and top officials, mayors of cities, productive faculty members and administrators, CEOs and managers of private firms, and founders of nonprofits. Just to give an example of the social impact of the program, Colfuturo graduates have contributed to Colombia's successful

public strategies for the curtailing of drug trafficking and guerrillas by applying knowledge and skills gained from studying defense and criminal studies abroad.

In comparative terms, the typical Colfuturo recipients tend to come from families with the higher levels of income. In 2011, 77% of the recipients came from households classified in the three top levels of income, according to the six-level Colombian socio-economic "estrato". On the other hand, between 1992 and 2010, almost 75% of the recipients were college graduates from Los Andes, Nacional, Javeriana, Externado, Rosario, Eafit, Antioquia, and Univalle. The high level of representation of private universities might also indicate a high representation of individuals from wealthier backgrounds. Yet, thanks to public funding, Colfuturo has widened access in late years, which might imply a higher representation of individuals from less affluent families. In geographical terms, the high level of participation of applicants from Bogota, has diminished during the last years, favoring the representation of other (developed) regions such as Antioquia, Valle, Santander, Atlántico, Caldas, Boyacá, Bolivar and Cundinamarca. Colfuturo does not ask for race/ethnicity in the application, but the participation of minorities such as African-Colombians and native Colombians appears to be low. The historical data show that men (57%) exceed women by 14 percentage points, which can be certainly higher than the gender distribution of the country, which appears to be almost even.

Beyond the now evident impact of Colfuturo on the formation of Colombia's public and private elites, it is pertinent to ask what makes this group of internationally educated professionals so attractive for and relevant to my research. In response I can identify four main traits:

- 1) The personal and technical skills acquired through attending international centers of knowledge makes them desirable for organizations in all sectors and increases their likelihood of reaching leadership and managerial positions.
- 2) Since they represent a distinctive set of highly skilled people, understanding their employment sector decisions can also provide evidence regarding the elements and features that most effectively determine their decisions to join the public sector. This can provide valuable input for public organizations' recruitment and retention strategies.
- 3) The positive signaling effect in labor markets of having an international degree makes their career decisions of research interest in order to understand how the highest echelons of organizations, especially in the public sector, are set or shaped.
- 4) The “non-academic” lessons they receive by living in different social, economic and political systems can affect their public service views and their levels of public service motivation. Their views can also provide elements for assessing differences among talented individuals in their motivation to work in public service.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Scarce empirical knowledge about the employment capabilities of the state, particularly evident in developing countries, operates as justification for an empirical analysis of the attractiveness of the public sector in a developing country such as Colombia. I aim to establish a link between research into job sector choice and public service motivation (Perry & Wise, 1990) scholarships in the context of a developing country. In light of these issues, my dissertation will focus on the following four interrelated research questions. I will explore the first two questions through quantitative methods, and the remaining two by means of a qualitative strategy:

- 1) What are the determinants of individual decisions to enter careers in the government, nonprofit, for-profit, and academic sectors in Colombia?
- 2) What is the role of public service motivation within that decision process in Colombia?
- 3) What is the role of personal antecedents, job attributes and work motivation in job choices in Colombia?
- 4) What role do those factors play in the decision to join (or not to join) the Colombian public sector?

These four questions are designed to respond to the following call by Peter Leisink and Bram Steijn (2008):

[I]f we want to learn more about the importance of public service motivation in attraction to particular sectors of employment, comparative research is needed that includes the full operationalization of public service motivation and other work motives, and that differentiates between different sectors. (p. 123)

#### **1.4 Contribution to the Field**

This project aims to make the following theoretical, methodological and practical contributions:

Theoretical Contributions: My dissertation aims to make three primary contributions to theory. First, it adds to research into job sector choice by examining four sectors (public, private, nonprofit and academic) instead of the typical public/private dichotomy used in most existing studies. Second, it expands upon the literature on job sector choice and public service motivation by introducing research from a developing country. Aside from some previous work focusing on countries like South Korea (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008) or Chile (Pliscoff, 2009), the public service motivation construct has not been widely tested in developing countries; my work contributes by conducting this study in another Latin American country. Third, there are



remarkably few empirical studies about public sector employment and human resources in Colombia. So far my literature review has identified a short list of descriptive works, solely focusing on the composition and background of bureaucratic elites. Apart from being the first to deal with the issues of PSM and job sector choice empirically within the Colombian context, this study can open the door for future empirical studies regarding human resources policies and public administration strategies in Colombia.

**Methodological Contributions:** This study will use a methodology that makes two contributions to the literature. First, it adds to existing research into job sector choice by using qualitative methods to capture elements not specified in the PSM context. Second, it addresses a time-order problem in previous work. Wright (2001) claims that public service motivation research has not been able to isolate the effects of selection, attrition and adaptation on sector choice, since it has only focused on post-employment choice situations. In this sense my work is located at an intermediate point between pre- and post-employment choice. In other words, it considers job sector decisions after students have left the job market to pursue graduate education abroad, and analyzes their first decisions when they rejoin the market after finishing their programs.

**Practical Contributions:** In practical terms my research aspires to offer insights that will help to improve human resources policies regarding the attraction, recruitment and retention of public managers in Colombia. First, it attempts to identify elements that affect the job sector choices of highly skilled individuals in order to inform human resources policies in a country like Colombia (Äijälä, 2001). Second, since it analyzes the interaction of PSM and job sector choices across four different sectors (public, private, nonprofit and academia), this dissertation sheds light on whether PSM might play an active role in human resources strategies in a

developing country. This element is relevant since some studies have concluded that not only public officials are able to show high levels of PSM (Steen, 2008), and that public sector workers might adapt their motivations to other sectors, (Wright & Christensen, 2010, p. 159).

In the following chapters I attempt to elucidate the elements that will allow me to answer the aforementioned questions. In chapter two I provide a review of the literature that has dealt with job sector choices and determinants of public sector jobs. In chapter three I provide a methodological framework for my empirical analysis. I employ statistical and qualitative resources in order to explore the determinants of job sector choice within a sample of highly qualified Colombians. Chapter four presents a statistical analysis of the determinants of job sector choices and the role of public service motivation in that process within the context of a developing country. By means of semi-structured interviews, in chapter five I analyze the role that personal antecedents, work motivation and job attributes play on the job choices of a group of internationally qualified people. Finally, in chapter six I present conclusions from both research endeavors and some policy recommendations intended to improve the attractiveness of the Colombian public sector among people with high levels of qualification.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In chapter one I defined the problem that motivates this dissertation, namely the lack of empirical evidence regarding job sector choice and public sector attractiveness in developing countries. During recent decades some practitioners and scholars in developed countries have argued that there has been a quiet crisis in the employment capabilities of the government. They contend that this has happened in response to different factors (for example, managerial reforms, societal changes, change in individual preferences regarding employment), yet they do not provide cumulative quantitative or qualitative evidence of such an event. More recently, empirical research from public administration scholars did not necessarily find evidence of erosion, but rather helped to identify different factors for explaining the sector of employment (for example, socio-demographic groups, orientation to public service, public values). However, most of these studies focus on evidence and samples from developed countries.

In other countries, especially in the developing world, public sector employment issues remain unexplored, particularly in terms of empirical research. Similar to the claims made by developed countries, some authors in Latin America and Colombia argue that the governments of these emerging nations have a natural poor ability to attract talented employees. Again, there is a paucity of studies for confirming or contradicting such a diagnosis. In fact, most studies regarding civil services and public sector employment in Latin America have adopted a descriptive/prescriptive approach in order to explain divergence from the ideal of merit-based services. Furthermore, studies into job sector choices and their determinants within such contexts are even less frequent.

In general, research into the processes and mechanisms of public sector employment in developing countries is rare. Therefore, it makes sense to open the door to such an analysis in a country like Colombia. In order to analyze the determinants of job sector choices in this country I rely on extant literature concerned with the determinants of job sector decisions. Since Colombia remains an unexplored case in terms of empirical public management scholarship, my work can contribute to reducing the shortage of empirical research regarding public sector choice in Latin America and other developing countries.

Accordingly, I proceeded to review the concepts and theories that provide the theoretical framework for my analysis of the determinants of job sector decisions of highly qualified people in Colombia. In doing so, I adopt a thematic structure in order to pursue the path of empirical research into job sector choice. First, I review the theories that rely on economic concepts. Second, I move onto approaches that analyze socio-demographic factors as determinant of choices regarding job sector. Third, I explore those works that introduced public values and motives as affecting job decisions, and finally, I assess other works that use organizational characteristics as determinants of sector choice.

## **2.2 Literature Review, Theoretical Framework and Research Questions**

This chapter is initially rooted in a consideration of the lack of empirical evidence in developing countries regarding job sector choice and public sector employment. The review of previous scholarship and their analyses of the determinants of job sector decisions can shed light on who wants to work for the government (or indeed for other sectors) in a country like Colombia. The contribution of further empirical evidence in developing countries can help to open the door for later comparative analyses of public employment systems by identifying

differences and similarities in terms of the determinants of sector choice in countries at varying developmental stages.

Each of the approaches reviewed accomplishes an important goal in my research endeavors. First, economic theories can provide a healthy basis for understanding why elements beyond economic rationality should be included in a model for sector sorting. Second, the models that have aimed to explain sector choice by analyzing socio-demographic factors provide important elements for the construction of my statistical model. Finally, recent approaches that have appealed to public service values and motivation include those features unique to working in the public service.

### **2.2.1 Economic Approaches to Job Sector Choice**

Different studies from the discipline of economics, and especially those written during the 1980s, aim to analyze the phenomenon of sector mobility and, at the same time, identify the determinants of switching: Fougere and Pouget (2003, p. 3) summarize some related studies; Bellante and Link (1981) identify public servants as more risk-averse; Goddeeris (1988) finds that the job sector decisions among a group of lawyers were affected by their political ideologies. Similarly, the authors cite some studies from France that find that the children of public servants have a higher probability of becoming public servants, while others that find that job applications increase in the public sector along with the unemployment rate. In their own analysis, Fougere and Pouget (2003) find that a high level of education and being the son of a civil servant have a positive correlation with getting a job in the public sector. They also confirm higher wage compression in the public sector and, more importantly, that wages in the public sector do not reflect individual productivity.

In order to explain the allocation of jobs within the sector economic theories use the concept of labor market segmentation expressed as a wage differential across sectors. In fact, the fragmentation is itself the cause of low mobility of workers between sectors (Gindling, 1991). According to this approach, human capital determines differences in earnings. In other words, schooling and work experience, rather than sector of work, determine salary differentials (Mincer, 1974). This economic approach assumes that workers are randomly assigned to varying sectors. According to this, if the market is segmented then jobs in the most desirable sector (that is to say, the one that offers higher salaries or a greater level of fringe benefits) have to be rationed (through job queues) (Said, 1996).

Although public administration studies have identified differences in the definition of wages within the public sector, economic literature initially assumed the existence of efficiency salaries in all sectors. According to Reich et al. (1973), both political and economic forces enable the segmentation of the labor market into smaller units with divergent rules and behaviors. This market segmentation, say in terms of a public/private sector divide, can usually be expressed through a wage differential. Sorting takes place in response to the different wage elasticities of each sector. In other words, workers who are more sensitive to changes in wages will quickly look for jobs in a sector with higher pay, while ones with lower elasticities will respond less rapidly to such changes. Yet although this recognizes distinctions between the workers in each sector, it is still based on the assumption that both kinds of employees respond to similar stimuli. Notwithstanding, whereas a private sector decision can be entirely determined by a salary change, in the public sector there are external elements that affect levels of employment, for instance unions (Forni & Giordano, 2003), wholesale public sector reforms and laws.

In such a model economic theory presumes the existence of efficiency wages, whereby firms pay above the market wage in order to encourage productivity and avoid shirking behaviors. However, this concept implies that the net productivity of workers is a function of the salary they receive (in relation to the market) (Heijdra & Van Der Ploeg, 2002) and thus implies that wages operate similarly in the public and private sectors. However, the strategic goal of a public sector worker (for example, maximize social welfare) is different from that of a private sector worker (for example, maximize profit) and so productivity can be explained by different motives.

Other authors identify another shortcomings in the way the model understands the allocation of jobs among workers. One classic paper about the public sector labor market by Ehrenberg and Schwarz (1983) recognizes the limitations of this approach, for instance, in explaining nonwage differences among individuals in each sector which are subsequently related to seeking job sector membership:

All of the studies of public/private wage differentials have treated individuals' sector of employment as exogenous. However, if individuals nonrandomly sort themselves into public or private jobs because of differences in tastes for public service or preferences for nonrisky employment, then the possibility of sample se[le]ction bias arises. In fact, evidence presented by Bellante and Link (1981) suggest that public sector workers are more risk averse than private sector workers and that, holding risk aversion constant, many of the same factors that influence wages in the public and private sector also influence the sector of employment. (Ehrenberg & Schwarz 1983, p. 60)

In fact, later studies tried to adjust this problem by developing switching regressions and job queue models in order to recognize and better explain the nonrandom assignation of workers among sectors. These studies also started to incorporate other nonwage factors that can explain motivation and/or job sector mobility (Akerlof, Rose & Yellen, 1988; Fougere & Pouget, 2003; Stelener et al, 1989; Van Der Gaag & Vijverberg, 1988; Van Ophem, 1993).

Among these studies, Stelener et al. (1989) find that in the case of Peru higher education, vocational training and receiving public education increase the probability of getting a job in the public sector, while age does not show any effect. For the same authors a higher public wage offer increases the probability of getting a public job, while a higher private wage offer reduces it. Likewise, Van Ophem (1993) adapted his model according to the selection bias problem and by adding some nonwage job attributes found that age increases the probability of getting a government job until the age of 51 years old. Yet other results by Van Ophem tend to contradict most previous research. According to his results, women and highly educated people are more likely to work for the private sector.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the so-called New Public Management (NPM) (or Reinventing Government movement in the U.S.) emerged as a set of private sector managerial practices to be applied in the public sector (Hood 1999; Barzelay 1992) to become “less unbusiness-like.” Initially only some developed countries (Anglo-Saxon, parliamentary) such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the UK implemented such practices (privatization, outsourcing, contracting out). However, structural adjustment programs during the 1980s and 1990s included some elements of NPM in state reform projects of developing countries.

However, the explanation of bureaucratic behavior that NPM gives assumes that the bureaucrat seeks to increase the bureau’s size and budget, or even maximize his or her own goals. That explanation rules out any possibility of altruistic behavior or service orientation among public sector employees, which can for instance affect job sector choices. In fact, some NPM prescriptions have proposed strategies that omit any possible distinction in motives between public and private sector employees. For instance, pay for performance has been proved



to be highly ineffective in most public sector settings, despite being initially promoted by some NPM advocates as a private practice to emulate in order to activate unresponsive bureaucracies.

To sum up, the literature reviewed illustrates how initially economic approaches tend to assume that private and public sectors are equal in terms of monetary and nonmonetary rewards, or at least make choices based on maximizing strategic behavior. Although they now recognize the presence of sorting in defining the levels of employment of each sector, there are other institutional factors and exogenous elements that affect employment in the public sector. Similarly, initially those approaches assumed that salaries in the public sector reflected productivity and, even more, supposed that workers were randomly assigned through sectors. Initial works within economics that aimed to understand job sector choices considered individual characteristics and intrinsic motivation as exogenous factors of job sector decisions.

Later studies have in fact aimed to expand the understanding of differences in employment in each sector according to the aforementioned limitations. In fact, such later studies attempted to identify exogenous factors that determine how individuals are sorted through sectors. For instance, Goddeeris argues that “[D]ifferences in non-pecuniary characteristics of jobs can give rise to differences in wages among equally productive workers since particularly desirable non-wage aspects compensate for lower pay” (1988, p. 411). Although this position can be seen as more coherent in relation to research into public sector employment, work motivation and PSM, it is not evident that economic theories have adopted elements from public administration scholarship to improve an understanding of job sector choices and mobility of workers. Efforts from public administration theorists (and even from generic management scholars) have provided useful constructs and models to understand how people make their job sector decisions.

### **2.2.2 Socio-Demographic Determinants of Job Sector Choice**

Initial works on job sector choices from the field of public administration aimed to identify the determinants of job sector choices for individuals, focusing especially on the socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals. Among these works we find those of Äijälä (2001), Blank (1985), Gabris and Simo (1995), Groeneveld et al. (2009), Lewis and Frank (2002), and Wright (2001). These works set the ground for later efforts that include these factors, besides other personal characteristics and values, in order to better explain how people choose their sector of work.

A seminal study by Blank (1985, p. 211) analyzes how employee choice between the public and private sectors reflects demographic characteristics. Using data from the May 1979 Current Population Survey, she found that women, minorities, highly educated people and more experienced workers are more likely than others to choose the public sector. According to her, the public sector might provide extra rewards for highly educated and more experienced workers. This also been confirmed by later works that have found similar results, such as Lewis and Frank (2002).

In 1995 a study by Gabris and Simo analyzed the role of different determinants, among them, the concept of public service motivation. The authors took PSM as an independent variable affecting career decisions in order to test its existence. In the authors' view, if PSM existed it did not exert any influence over career choices. Yet later research into PSM and job sector choices has systematically contradicted their conclusions (see section on PSM literature).

Äijälä (2001) analyzed some factors and job attributes affecting the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer of choice in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (for example, demographic development, low wages in the public sector, image of the public sector, seniority rather than merit in promotion, and unclear

career paths, among others). He also analyzed the tasks that the OECD country members should perform in order to attract highly skilled individuals to join the public sector. The author concluded that the public sector in OECD countries was lagging behind other sectors in attracting the most talented candidates.

In a similar effort, Lewis and Frank (2002) studied how the demographic characteristics of individuals and job attributes affect decisions to join the public sector. The authors followed a quantitative methodology, which led them to find that minorities, younger Americans, women and college graduates (the more educated) were more likely to join the public sector. Remarkably, they added a proxy variable of public service motivation to their model, as I show later in the literature review regarding public service motivation (section 2.1.2.2).

Together, elements taken from the approaches of economics and socio-demographic factors provide most of the basis for my first research question. However, other elements from the following approaches will also be added to that purpose.

First Research Question: What are the determinants for individual decisions to enter careers in the government, nonprofit, for-profit and academic sectors in Colombia?

### **2.2.3 Public Values, Public Service and Job Sector Choice**

After focusing on an analysis of the socio-demographic determinants of job sector choice, later studies from public management scholarship have aimed to expand the explanations provided for those choices in relation to motivational factors, particularly in relation to public values, attraction and motivation to public service. Some of these studies have tackled issues beyond job sector choice and taken the analysis beyond the traditional public/private divide (Christensen & Wright, 2009; Steijn, 2008; Tschirhart et al., 2008; Vandenabeele, 2008; Wright & Christensen, 2010). These works, however, have mostly used data from developed countries.

Consequently, there is little scholarship concerning how values and motivational factors affect decisions regarding working for the public sector in the context of developing countries. In this section I analyze three main sources of research, specifically, works from different authors that aim to explain attraction to public service, the debate between public values and public value, and all the contributions that have relied on the public service motivation construct.

### ***2.2.3.1 Attraction to Public Service and Job Sector Choice***

Early works from public administration scholars on the attraction of public service and public jobs started in the 1960s. These works laid the ground for later scholarship on both public values and motivation to public service. The first efforts focused on explaining the differences between public and private sector workers, for instance by theorizing and observing the motives for their actions. One of the initial works by Kilpatrick et al. (1964) called attention to differences in service orientation. Later, in 1967, Anthony Downs typified bureaucrats according to the goals they pursue. Some of these types reflected those individuals who are attracted to public service work, for instance zealots, advocates or statesmen. Such a structure successfully typified different reasons for why individuals seek, for instance, public sector employment.

In 1968 Frederick Mosher aimed to describe the historical development of American public administration and government around the role of public service. The author enriched the discussion of public values and public sector distinctiveness by providing a comprehensive view of bureaucracies. He also dealt with elements related to attraction to public service. For instance, in Mosher's view merit systems are able to generate loyalty and devotion among public servants. His contributions have provided a profound description of the democratic limitations and potential of the public service. He was able to envision the interaction between managerial aspects, such as merit systems, training and performance, and political and public values, such as

participation, representation, bargaining, unionizing and morality. Even today his work still affects scholarship regarding the political and democratic impact of civil service systems.

From the 1980s onwards scholars started to define elements that characterized the civil service in relation to outcomes such as job sector choice. In 1983 Hal Rainey aimed to analyze whether organizations subject to political or hierarchical controls differed from those more heavily subjected to markets. Although he found little difference in terms of intrinsic incentives and motivation, the author highlighted how public managers ranked highly on “meaningful public service.” Indeed, Rainey identified different sorts of incentives for public organizations, which according to him would require a different reward strategy going beyond extrinsic motivators. Additionally, he remarked on the implications of consistently finding high levels of public motivation and effort among public managers in his study.

The contribution of Rainey to the understanding of public organizations has been highly influential on later scholarship. It opened the door for in-house studies of public organizations and provided powerful concepts that still dominate our understanding of public agencies and public workers today. His research has not only led to greater recognition that different motives and reactions to rewards exist among public officials, but also set the ground for subsequent research into why people are attracted to public sector jobs.

Later works offer a more comprehensive picture of the elements that attract individuals to public service and public jobs. In fact, subsequent models explore the understanding of motivation to service as a distinctive feature that becomes a driver in seeking public sector employment. Perry and Porter (1982) were able to depict a unique context for service motivation in public organizations, something that contemporary public administration scholarship had not directly explored. In a similar vein, Frederickson and Hart (1985) built the concept of “Patriotism

of benevolence,” defined as affection for others and a devotion to defending basic rights. This sentiment, they argue, is a common trait among public sector employees.

Perhaps as a response to the partial views of economics and New Public Management perspectives, recent research into public values and public service motivation has aimed to offer comprehensive explanations for those intrinsic elements that explain the decisions and behavior of public sector employees, especially regarding attraction to public sector jobs. Pioneering research undertaken by scholars from public administration, such as Mosher, Rainey and Frederickson, did lay the foundations for a better understanding of other factors that explain job sector choice in the public sector.

There is another approach that although not identified within public management scholarship, provides relevant insights for understanding the role of personal values and motives in relation to an attraction to public service and public service jobs. In the United Kingdom in 2003 Julian Le Grand published a book on motivation and agency as drivers of public policies. In order to analyze the effect of motivation on public policy Le Grand created some metaphors. For him individuals can be knights – those who are mainly altruistic or want to help others – or knaves – those who pursue self-interest in their actions through legal or illegal means. In his view, these distinctions in terms of motivation and the roles that individuals with different motivations play can result in very different policy instruments and outcomes.

Le Grand argues that both knights and knaves are present in the delivery of public services, asking interesting questions as to how individuals from both sides choose their jobs. In doing so he also recognizes the temporal nature of motivation, that is to say, individuals can sometimes behave according to altruistic motivations and at other times can be more driven by selfishness. According to the effect that motivation plays on policies then, the author concludes that a

contingent incentives structure in public policy should be considered in order to affect both kinds of motivations and, subsequently, public policies.

Correspondingly, Le Grand aimed to depict the different reactions of individuals (knights and knaves) to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. He argued that policy makers should know the incentive structures of an individual or a group of them, in order to align both knightly and knavish behaviors. In his view, we cannot rely only on knights to deliver public services and, in this way, both knights and knaves should be aligned with “robust” (or contingent) strategies. Yet Le Grand (2003) is not specific about how to use “robust” strategies, for instance at different stages of the employment relationship (recruitment, selection, retention).

The work of Le Grand raises important questions in relation to my research: Are knights or knaves more likely to go into a particular sector or towards certain activities inside the public sector? Are there a greater number of knaves in the private sector? Are there not any knaves in the nonprofit sector? Is it possible that knights can be more present in countries with stringent social realities like Colombia? These questions, although they go beyond the reach of this work, offer new ideas for future research. Le Grand’s approach provides interesting input for human resources practice, for example, his distinction between knaves and knights might help our understanding as to how the public sector in Colombia can not only make access to the public sector jobs of knights easier (groups that are naturally attracted by altruism and sense of duty), but also of knaves (those who are motivated by extrinsic factors).

### **2.2.3.2      *Public Value, Public Values and Attraction to Public Service: A Debate***

Authors Michael Moore and Barry Bozeman took part in an interesting debate regarding what represents or has public value in the actions of government. Each of them approached the discussion from divergent academic perspectives and raised interesting questions regarding job sector choice and public sector membership. Mark Moore's book *Creating Public Value* (1995) argued that actions from the government should only be justified when they create public value (say satisfying the needs of citizens with efficiency and fairness). From Moore's perspective, whereas private managers try to create private value in the private sector, the goal of public managers should be to create public value. Other public management scholars, particularly Bozeman, have questioned this approach because rather than being something that is generated, public value pertains to public actions per se.

In terms of job sector choice, Moore (1995, p. 298) questioned the assumption that "those who choose to work for the government are content with putting their own moral views about the public interest and public value in abeyance." In saying this, Moore recognized the role that particular views of public interest or public values play in attracting individuals to government positions. He saw it as a compensation for joining the public sector and underscored how society usually puts a prize on individuals who are able to make financial sacrifices in order to pursue a particular view of public good. For Moore, individuals are attracted to public service for the purpose of imprinting their own views, failing to consider other motives and incentives beyond pursuing particular goals (altruism, pro-social behavior).

The response from Bozeman (2007) to Moore's perspective is that motivation to public service is not a myth and that this kind of motivation operates as an attractor of people to public service and to government jobs. In his view, some of the actions that according to Moore intend to generate public value can actually have a crowding out effect in the motivation to undertake



public service for public officials. He believes the new public management approach returns to Taylor's perspective that the worker/manager role is completely minimized and that his or her particular characteristics are irrelevant, showing a complete oversight of the theoretical advances that have helped us to better understand the behavior of the individual within the organization.

The main contribution of Bozeman's approach is the recognition that public values and public interest affect job sector choice. There are other elements beyond economic rationality or satisfying citizen demands in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. By remarking on the role of public values in the public actions of governments, Bozeman lays the foundations for an understanding of how congruence with those values can be a key element in understanding job sector choices and beyond that, why the public sector can appear as an attractive employer for certain individuals.

#### **2.2.3.3        *Motivation in Public Service***

In the last two decades, theoretical approaches towards motivation in public service have become more sophisticated in terms of methods and increasing specificity. Although PSM is not only circumscribed to the public sector, since other sectors' employees also can exhibit PSM, an important part of the literature aims to explain job sector choice and an assumed positive relationship between PSM and public sector employment. Initially, scholars started with studies intended to identify features of public servants and their differences in comparison to workers from other sectors, see for instance Crewson (1995), Houston (2000), and Light (1999). Other researchers analyzed the particular reactions of public servants to intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, especially in comparison to private sector workers, see Rainey (1982) and Crewson (1997). For instance, the work of Crewson (1997) attempted to identify the motivational differences between public and private sector employees. According to his results, public

officials are more prone to serving society and helping others and are also less motivated by extrinsic motivators than their private sector counterparts.

Later works have built a complete theoretical framework for the understanding of motivation within public sector employment. James Perry (1990, 1996, 1997, 2000) is one of the most prominent scholars in the study of the incentive structures that differentiate public and private sector workers. Perry and Recascino Wise (1990) defined the concept of PSM as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations.” In this seminal paper the authors stated their influential premise that individuals with greater PSM are more likely to join a public organization (1990, p. 370).

In 1996, Perry devised a comprehensive approach for the analysis motivation in public service, including a theoretical framework and a measurement instrument of PSM. In that framework, Perry incorporated four different dimensions of PSM that reflect prior work in generic management, economics and rational choice: a) An attraction to public policy making, b) a commitment to the public interest and civic duty, c) compassion, and d) self-sacrifice. In a similar vein, he asserts that there are three types of motivation that are related to the aforementioned dimensions: Rational (related to attraction), Normative (related to public interest) and Affective (related to emotion and sense of help). These dimensions explain why some people are more likely to join the public sector and/or be motivated to perform public service and pro-social activities.

Since such studies there has been a consistent trend in research that states that public servants actually have a different set of values from private sector workers and, accordingly, that they take into consideration different incentives and motivators when making job sector decisions. Based on findings by Perry and Wise (1990), Houston (2000) states that:

[I]n comparison with private sector workers, public employees will place a higher value on such intrinsic rewards as service to society, the public interest and the importance of work [...] They also rate more highly such instrumental values as empathy, equity, and the public interest, and they view efficiency as less important than do individuals associated with private-sector oriented programs. (p. 716)

In 1997 Perry aimed to explore the antecedents of public service motivation in order to analyze the relationship between PSM and background aspects, such as parental socialization, religious socialization, professional identification, political ideology, and individual demographic characteristics. He found that aspects such as education, age, gender (particularly the male gender), and parental modeling are significant in explaining the different dimensions of PSM (attraction to policy making, compassion, self-sacrifice, and commitment to public interest/civic duty). Religious elements and parental relations were not significant. The author did not find a clear relationship for aspects such as professional identification and political ideology, income and church involvement. Although not directly related to sector choice, I take into consideration some of these elements in the qualitative analysis developed in chapter five.

To sum up, the PSM theory of Perry provides a strong foundation for any explanation of sector membership, especially in relation to public service (2000):

The primary motivators for public-sector employees are the interests that attract them to public service. These interests are different from those of people who self-select into private sector. Despite the rhetoric and disdain for the impersonal bureaucracy, a respect for rules might be closely associated with the desire to help obtain the common good. (p. 484)

In doing so, Perry has been able to build a theory of motivation in public management from generic work motivation theories, providing a wider view of what explains attraction to public service beyond the predominant idea of self-interest present in public choice theories and NPM practices.

A recent article by Perry, Hondeghem and Wise (2010) revisits the motivational bases for public service 20 years after the publication of the 1990 paper by Perry and Wise. Regarding job sector choice they showed how extant literature, although limited, are generally supportive of the proposition that individuals with greater PSM are more likely to seek membership in public organizations. In fact, the authors called attention to the development of further research into job sector choice by relying on the promising person-environment fit model.

Yet the challenge is still remains and another relevant question is, what are the channels through which PSM plays a role in job sector choice? In terms of future research, Perry and Hondeghem ask, “Do people enter the public sector because of their attraction to public service? Or do public organizations increase public service motivation through mechanisms of socialization, social identification and social learning [...]?” (2008, p. 297). This implies clear distinctions as to how public service motivation can affect differently processes such as recruitment and retention and how it differs from generic work motivation. I intend to contribute to this by expanding our knowledge of its effect on underdeveloped civil services in developing countries.

Generally, PSM starts with the premise that those individuals with high levels of PSM are more likely to choose jobs with a service orientation. According to this statement, more recent scholarship has been able to further depict and explain how individuals choose jobs and sectors. The almost unexplored role of PSM in the context of developing countries provides a solid ground for exploring the ways in which such a concept operates in the context of weak, and even failing states, in developing countries. Since PSM has been said to not hold a monopoly over the public sector, is it possible that in developing countries, given the limited impact of government actions, people find more effective ways of expressing and fulfilling their motivation to service?

I explore these elements by analyzing the relationship of PMS to job sector decisions across four different sectors.

#### **2.2.3.4        *Public Service Motivation and Job Sector Choice***

In this sub-section I review the specific works that, similar to the goal of my dissertation, have attempted to test the relationship between PSM and job sector choice. As mentioned before, in a recent review of 20 years of PSM research, Perry et al. (2010) confirmed the initial 1990 premise, asserting that research on attraction-selection-attrition, although limited, is generally supportive of the idea that individuals with high PSM “would seek out contexts compatible with their dispositions” (2010, p. 683). The authors conclude that the research results regarding the effect of PSM on job sector choice are promising so far, but that more research is still needed. How does this situation relate to my own research? The evidence so far does not necessarily imply that all job candidates with high pre-entry PSM would necessarily prefer to join public organizations or that they indeed do so; they have also been identified as finding ways to channel their PSM into other sectors.

A limited but relevant number of works have aimed to understand job sector choice in the context of public service motivation: Gabris and Simo (1995), Wright (2001), Lewis and Frank (2002), Groeneveld et al. (2009). Recent studies have gone beyond this and have aimed to analyze sector switching while they have also explored other sectors beyond the public/private dichotomy: Christensen and Wright (2009), Steijn (2008), Sue and Bozeman (2009a, 2009b), Tschirhart et al. (2008), Vandenabeele (2008), Wright and Christensen (2010). Other studies have also attempted to understand the influence of PSM on human resources management and aim to inform human resources practices (Leisink & Steijn, 2008).

In the previously cited article of Bradley Wright (2001), the author illustrates the importance of job sector choice within the context of public sector. In particular, he notes the existence of untested premises in extant PSM research regarding sector membership motivation, Wright (2001, p. 563):

Sector employment choice – whether an individual joins and maintains either public-or private sector employment – is critical to understanding the current public sector literature on work motivation, because the very premise of this literature is that the motivational context in one sector is some way different from that of the other.

In saying this, this theorist implies that one of the main challenges for public management research is disentangling the relationship between PSM and sector choices.

Wright's quote reflects one of the main purposes of my dissertation project: I want to test, within the context of a developing country, whether individuals who choose one sector display a different set of features and determinants from those individuals who select other sectors within which to work. Although this question seems straightforward it actually has significant theoretical implications. For instance, it might help us to analyze whether PSM and generic work motivation are different constructs and play different roles in the employee's behavior in a country that is affected by complex social phenomena. In such countries, due to the limited impact of the actions of government, people might try to find other loci in which to express their motivation to service. On the other hand, is it possible that PSM plays a role in the process of attraction? Following on from this, does work motivation play a greater role in retention? Can it be possible that better endowed private organizations (or even nonprofits through international aid) provide conditions that enhance work motivation and thus lead to the attraction of the most talented people with high levels of PSM?

Research into PSM and job sector choice still challenges us to test that relationship. Wright (2001) provides a review of the main sector differences that the literature has found so far and,

subsequently, these guide my model. The author asserts that, according to existent scholarship sector differences have become inputs for individuals when choosing jobs in sectors that fit their expectations and most salient needs. He underscores how in public administration scholarship employee motives operate as drivers in the configuration of the public sector through the self-selection of individuals with a strong motivation to public service. However, he believes that research that has aimed to explain job sector choice has not been able to isolate the effects of elements such as selection, attrition and adaptation in the decision to work in one sector, since such research has focused in post-employment choice situations.

If Wright's contentions are right then this might mean that most research that has aimed to explore the relationship between public service motivation and job sector choice presents a time-order problem that can serve to erode the internal validity of results. This problem has, according to Wright, hindered advancements in our understanding of the different roles that PSM and work motivation play in different moments of the employment relationship. This is an element that I consider and adopt in my research methodology.

Specifically, my work attempts to overcome this shortcoming through an analysis of the job sector decisions of a group of Colombians at an intermediate point between pre and post-employment choice. That is to say, I analyze the job sector decisions after the students have left the job market to study abroad. My dependent variable reflects their first decision when they rejoin the market after finishing their educational programs. Although some other elements might contaminate my analysis, especially in the qualitative study, since it was completed years after they made their decisions, I rely on rich sources of quantitative and qualitative information, pre and post-employment.

Wright also remarks how most studies have still not reached absolute conclusions regarding differences in elements such as power needs, status, esteem, and job security between public and private sector employees. Nevertheless, Wright recognizes the importance of works that have found coherence between reward preferences and sector of choice. For him, this is especially clear in works that note the lower value that public sector workers place on financial rewards while highly valuing the idea of helping others or doing meaningful public service. Yet he concludes that the causal direction for sector differences still remains uncertain and that more research is needed. Therefore, by analyzing the relationship between PSM and choice across different sectors in an unexplored setting like Colombia, my work can offer comparative elements regarding previous literature from developed countries.

Lewis and Frank (2002) find that individuals with high levels of public service motivation (using a proxy of it rather than the Perry construct) are slightly more likely to join the public service than those with low levels of motivation. However, the fact that they used a proxy instead of the construct that other studies have used might reduce the reliability and internal validity of their results regarding PSM. However, an important contribution made by the work by Lewis and Frank (2002) is that they aim to understand the job sector decisions of people not only by analyzing the role of motivation, but also by taking into account the role that “chance” can play in becoming a public servant. Are highly skilled and motivated individuals able to join the public sector in Colombia in which political patronage and cronyism dominate the allocation of public jobs? This is a crucial element of my analysis and I will try to explore, primarily through qualitative research, whether highly skilled Colombians were able to find jobs in the public sector when they re-entered the market after graduate education abroad.



More recent studies have empirically analyzed the role of PSM in job sector choice by means of diverse analytical frameworks and by applying it in new international settings. Moynihan (2008) tried to test two divergent assumptions that establish the difference between a normative managing model and the “rival” market model. He provided evidence on how the market model undermines public service motivation by introducing distortions in the selection of people who work with the government by changing the organizational environment, its rules and incentives system. He argued that both the public and nonprofit control systems should be set to the normative values of those who want to join them. Although he calls attention to the mistakes made by managerial reformers who have pursued practices that crowd-out public service values, he acknowledges that an adequate combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators is necessary.

In analyzing a sample of Belgian students, Vandenabeele (2008) finds that PSM mediates the level of attractiveness of the public sector. He also confirms the findings of previous research undertaken in the U.S., namely that potential employees with high PSM are more likely to join the public sector. Vandenabeele also underscores the high explanatory power of the concept of person-organization fit in explaining how people make job sector decisions. According to his results there is a negative correlation between PSM and private sector attractiveness, which is coherent with the idea of people with high PSM looking for a potential job in the public sector. Although the author acknowledges some elements of Belgian culture that can affect the validity of some of his results, he provides compelling conclusions. According to his results, PSM is present before entry into the job market and proves to be valid in a non-U.S. (European) context. However, how is it within the context of a country outside of the Western world (that is, the U.S. and Europe)? The fact that I explore four different sectors can also help to develop a wider

understanding of the mechanisms through which PSM affects job sector choices in countries with poorly endowed, untrusted and politicized civil services.

Another European study offers another angle on PSM, namely job sector choice relationship. Using a longitudinal sample of Dutch public servants Groeneveld, Steijn and Van der Parre (2009) find that the existence of recruitment campaigns can intensify the positive effect of both PSM and public sector employment. According to the authors, while economic environment matters in the decisions of individuals, PSM plays a decisive role when the government deploys concrete actions in order to attract highly motivated individuals. These insights can inform practices in countries where recruitment campaigns are almost inexistent, like in the Colombian case.

In general, the PSM framework and the literature on determinants of job sector choices provide the framework for answering my second research question.

Second Research Question: What is the role of public service motivation within the job sector choice process in Colombia?

#### **2.2.3.5        *Person-Environment Fit, PSM and Job Sector Choice***

In recent times an important number of public administration scholars have increasingly resorted to the person-environment fit (P-E fit) (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) approach to understanding different outcomes, including job sector choices. This set of works aims to understand the effect of the compatibility of an individual with his or her environment on organizational outcomes. In this case fit implies a fit with different aspects of the work relationship, for example person-job fit (P-J), person-organization fit (P-O), among others. In terms of job sector choice, such an approach has deepened our understanding of the role of value

congruence and PSM in human resources process such as recruitment and selection. I present some of the works that have relied on this model to explain job sector choice.

Leisink and Steijn (2008) underscore the role of public service motivation in recruitment and selection processes from the point of view of both the worker and the organization. To do so they analyze works from person-environment P-E fit (for the employee) and social identity theory (for the organization). In terms of person-job (P-J) fit they argue that individuals look for a job where they can use their abilities (demand-abilities fit), a job that is interesting, a job in which they can combine work and family (need-supply fit), and fulfill their public service motivation (value congruence). Yet they conclude that people have to choose and establish priorities among these values when making job choices.

Later, Leisink and Steijn (2008) move to social identity theory, which states that individuals often classify people and themselves in specific social categories. According to these authors recruitment processes usually include a person-job abilities assessment, which is done through interviews. In other words, public organizations might select individuals with relatively lower PSM but a higher job demands-abilities fit. They argue that PSM can hardly be an element for selection and that it may have become less important for public organizations. However, they do not explain how or why PSM is more important than before.

Still, Leisink and Steijn recognize that job interviews can be used by public organizations to select people with high PSM (assuming that it leads to better performance). Yet they warn us about the risks of establishing PSM as one of the recruitment “filters.” First, the scholarship contains confounding evidence about the effects on some organizational outcomes like performance, so we still need more conclusive evidence if we are to recommend such practices. Second, extant research has not advanced towards the identification of practical strategies in

relation to assessing PSM in recruitment processes. Hence the authors state that there is still a lot to do before listing prescriptions. Overall, it is remarkable that this work highlights relevant questions that might bring to light some applications of the PSM concept, for instance by means of the P-E fit construct. Since these aspects are still unexplored in developed countries it makes sense to evaluate the applicability of such prescriptions in other international settings.

From a large sample of Dutch public officials Steijn (2008) finds a small but significant difference among the levels of PSM in public and private sector employees. Although he uses only one item to measure PSM he confirms the initial proposition of Perry and Wise about higher public sector membership for individuals with high PSM. In fact, he concludes that private sector employees with high levels of PSM are more likely to look for a job in the public sector than those with lower PSM. Steijn also provides evidence to support the premise that PSM increases retention. Although the operationalization of some concepts in this work has some limitations, the author, by means of the P-J fit concept, offers evidence about a direct relationship between PSM and vocational choices.

Wright and Pandey (2008) show a critical point of view regarding the advancement of PSM research in the P-E fit framework. According to the authors public service motivation only achieves its assumed positive effect on organizational outcomes when the employee sees a relationship between his/her public service motivation goals or values and those of the organization, or the idea of P-O fit through value congruence. In this work I use a similar definition of value congruence. However, my definition is not only related to public service motivation goals but also to other specific values that might be important in terms of congruence between the worker and the organization in other sectors, for instance entrepreneurialism for the private sector, and volunteerism and charity for the nonprofit, among others.

This is how they propose the value congruence model for testing the relationship between PSM and organizational outcomes. According to this, PSM is more than an end in itself and might become a means to achieving a better P-E fit, which subsequently affects outcomes such as turnover and retention rates. From a sample of 206 individuals in professional and managerial positions in public organizations Wright and Pandey found statistical evidence for their hypothesis that PSM is mediated by the degree of value congruence between the employees and the organization's values. This might be indicative of the idea that although PSM can help recruitment, performance can later be affected by generic work motivation.

Interestingly, Wright and Pandey (2008, p. 516) recognize the importance of communication and performance feedback in order to highlight how to make individual values coincide with organizational values and how to make visible the contribution of the worker to the organization and to the society at large. In this way, PSM can be a mean an increase in organizational performance, productivity, etc., since:

[P]ublic organizations are not just passive beneficiaries of employee public service motivation levels inculcated and developed through earlier life experience (socio-historical factors in Perry's usage). Instead, such benefits may depend on providing the appropriate supporting conditions within the organization.

These insights constitute valuable input for the policy recommendations in countries with poor recruitment strategies like Colombia.

In a similar vein, Bright (2008) aims to analyze the extent to which the relationships between PSM, job satisfaction and turnover are mediated by P-O fit. Bright explores the contradictions within previous research regarding the apparently positive relationship between PSM and job satisfaction on the one hand, and the negative relationship between tenure and PSM on the other. According to Bright, the P-O fit concept can help explain the origin of these inconsistencies, since previous scholars did not consider the congruence of characteristics (which

are not only values in this author's view) between the organization and the employee. The author found significant statistical evidence for the hypothesis that public officials with higher levels of PSM show higher levels of congruence with their organizations. Likewise, he found that high levels of congruence are positively related to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions.

The most important contribution of this work is that it provides a solid ground for an analysis of how the role of PSM is mediated by P-O fit and changes over time. Indeed, PSM is found to mediate the relationship with public sector membership:

PSM alone cannot guarantee compatibility between individuals and organizations [...] PSM does not offer infinite benefits in every public sector environment. Although PSM may attract public employees to public service work, this benefit is short lived in unfavorable public sector environments. The positive effects of PSM on compatibility can change over time, particularly in hostile working conditions. (2008, p. 163)

From another perspective, Steen (2008, p. 204) argues that people with high PSM might also work on other sectors in response to the poor availability of public sector jobs: "Becoming a public sector employee involves not only making a choice but also having the opportunity to do so..." Steen states that in countries where the public sector is still highly valued there are more people wanting to work with the government than jobs available (meaning that the government can pay less). Therefore, for Steen it is necessary that sector preference and sector choice be separated, since individuals adapt their decisions according to the availability of jobs. Steen has opened an avenue for understanding how people with high PSM, who are unable to find a job in the public sector, decide to enter other sectors and adapt their motives to the channels available to them.

Availability of jobs can actually determine job sector choice in countries with fewer abundantly skilled workers. Here the market defines high prices according to low supply and

thus workers with high levels of education become valuable and elusive assets. Such workers in countries like Colombia might be less attracted to (or poorly retained by) public organizations with less attractive offers in terms of contracts, benefits and compensation packages. On the other hand, availability is also critical in countries where the public sector is not highly valued, like in Colombia (Carlson & Payne, 2003, p. 131). In such countries highly qualified people (even with high levels of PSM) might choose other sectors due to the unavailability of adequate jobs (as a result of cliques, political patronage, cronyism, and so on), the low quality of jobs (low pay, poor benefits, scarce opportunities for promotion and professional development), or even due to the legal implications of a public job.

Overall, value congruence emerges as an important contribution in understanding the effect of person-environment fit on job sector choices. For instance, Christensen and Wright (2009) have broadened our understanding of PSM as not being a public sector monopoly. Here the effects of PSM might depend less on the sector of employment than on the degree of value congruence or the supplies that the organization provides for the individual needs. Nonetheless, they argue that much previous research cofounds the effects of P-O and P-J fit, and actually concentrates only on P-O fit. The authors also criticize the fact that previous studies into job sector choice mostly use public sector samples and post-entry data, a critique that reiterates Wright's claims from 2001.

Christensen and Wright aimed to separate the effects of P-O fit and P-J fit and to analyze the characteristics of the job that influence employees' job choices. From a sample of 210 first year law students, and after controlling for the characteristics that define person-job fit, the authors found no direct influence of PSM on the probability of an individual joining the public sector or the private sector, but only in the nonprofit sector. They proposed an interesting

conclusion about the importance of P-J fit: “Regardless of employment sector, individuals with stronger PSM are more likely to accept jobs that emphasize service to others whether that be pro bono work (private sector), client interaction (public sector) or client representation (nonprofit sector)” (2009, p. 18).

This work by Christensen and Wright advanced our understanding of the effect of PSM on other organizational outcomes. In their view, “simply linking PSM and employment sector is insufficient to determine person-organization fit” (2009, p. 18). Additionally, their findings support their hypothesis that P-J fit plays a foremost role in explaining the relationship between PSM and job choice, even more than the previously assumed role of P-O fit. Interestingly, and following on from other authors (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Wright & Pandey, 2008), this work recommends better communication of the service emphasis that public jobs can have in order to facilitate the congruence of values with job applicants.

More recent studies have explored the role of socialization and adjustment after sector choice. Wright and Christensen (2010) attempt to identify the theoretical link among PSM, the Schneider attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model, and the P-O fit theory. Individuals are attracted to organizations that fit their own characteristics, yet this assessment changes over time. The authors introduced time into the model in order to analyze the reciprocal (endogenous) relationship between values (PSM) and employment decisions:

While PSM values may influence employment decisions (attraction-selection), these results could also be as interpreted as evidence that the employment decisions influence their values (socialization). To provide stronger evidence for the influence of PSM on employment decisions, this study extends this previous research by testing the ability of these values to predict sector of employment at different points of time. (2010, p. 157)

In order to do so the authors analyze a panel data of lawyers using a single measure of PSM regarding people who chose jobs according to their “interest in social service/helping



others.” Wright and Christensen find that PSM influence on job sector choices actually changes at different stages of an employee’s career. For instance, PSM may be more influential when recruiting employees with previous job experience than for their first professional jobs. They also confirm something that has consistently been noted in the literature (Houston, 2011; Steen, 2008), namely that PSM is not a public sector monopoly even though it was certainly more commonly found among those lawyers working in the public sector.

Wright and Christensen (2010) argue that PSM might be “more or less” influential in job sector choices during a career. They assert that their results actually follow previous research (Lewis & Frank, 2002; Tschirhart et al., 2008) in finding that PSM is a good predictor of the desire to work for the public sector, but not whether individuals actually work for the public sector. They conclude that: “...instead of asking whether PSM affects employee attraction and retention, perhaps it is more appropriate to ask under what conditions PSM affects employee attraction and retention” (2010, p. 169). In general terms, the main contribution of this work is that they were able to analyze job sector choices from a longitudinal perspective, thus framing PSM as a dynamic concept the effects of which change over time and have limited impact on the actual choice.

Although I do not directly test P-E fit, I employ this theoretical approach in order to understand qualitatively how the individual makes job sector decisions. P-E fit approaches relate to public values, public service and motivation in public service, by providing a framework to understand the congruence between the individual and the organization's or the sector (public) values as a determinant of work sector choices. In this way, the role of congruence can be highly relevant when asking individuals about work motivation, organizational attributes and job sector choice.

#### **2.2.4 Organizational Factors and Job Attributes as Determinants of Sector Choices**

Recent studies have aimed to provide a dynamic perspective on sector mobility by pursuing an analysis of switching between sectors according to some organizational factors. Su and Bozeman summarize factors that affect job sector choice and switching: “Job choice is subject to the influences of multiple factors including but not limited to job choice motivation, organizational recruitment activities, and organizational structures and, of course, a variety of exogenous factors related to job markets” (2009a, p. 18). Using quantitative data they analyze how switching sectors affects individuals’ job sector choice. To do so they consider the job trajectories and switches among sectors rather than just analyzing individuals in one single job.

In a similar study, Su and Bozeman (2009b) apply event history analysis in order to study the dynamics of job sector switching. They find evidence that the probability of switching sectors varies according to occupational structure and the occupation itself. The authors argue that according to their results – collected using National Administrative Studies Project (NASP-III) data – the public sector seems to have an ability to provide some incentives that encourage people to switch across from the private sector. In fact, Su and Bozeman argue that individuals whose first job was in the private sector are more likely to switch to public organizations, but not to the nonprofit sector. They considered it an input for practices in recruitment in the public sector, which I take into consideration into my policy recommendations accordingly.

In spite of these studies, Bozeman and Ponomariov (2009) assert that studies of sector switchers are “uncommon” and not systematic. In their article they analyze, from a sample of state-level public managers, the effects of private sector job experience on two items: Probability of promotion and number of employees supervised. The authors argue that according to their results – obtained through data from NASP-III – individuals with experience in the private sector

have a greater likelihood of being promoted and therefore of supervising a greater number of people, although this effect decreases with longer experience.

Later in this section I also analyze two approaches from generic management scholarship that can enrich my understanding of how people make job sector choices. In particular, I look at some work motivation approaches and other theories that consider the roles played by job attributes in some organizational outcomes.

#### **2.2.4.1      *Work Motivation and Job Sector Choice***

In the 1950s some approaches emerged with the concrete goal of understanding motivation in human behavior, and especially in organizational work settings. Those initial theories aimed to understand both the drivers that elicit certain human behaviors in work settings and the intricacies of the process of motivation itself. Scholars have classified them in two main groups: 1) Content theories and 2) Process theories. I explore some elements of these approaches that can inform my analysis of job sector choices and public sector attractiveness.

Content theories concerning work motivation focus on identifying elements that generate motivation in the individual and subsequently affect his or her behavior. Within this group of theories we find the works of scholars such as Maslow (1954) and the hierarchy of needs, McGregor and his Theory X and Theory Y (1960), McClelland (1961) with Achievement Motivation Theory and Herzberg (1968) and the Two-factor Theory or Motivation-hygiene Theory. Although none of these scholars have considered the phenomenon of job sector choice specifically, some elements of their work can inform my analysis of the determinants of job sector decisions.

In 1954 Abraham Maslow developed his theory that physiological needs are “the most prepotent of all needs” as individuals look for self-actualization. How do Maslow’s ideas of self-

actualization inform motivation for public service and its role in job sector choices? For instance, is it possible that once they have satisfied all their lower order needs individuals become more oriented towards serving others? In Maslow's view individuals tend to develop civic features and can become better "parents, husbands, teachers and public servants" (1954, p. 58). However, it might be possible to find people who do not necessarily follow the hierarchy of needs in order to "achieve self-actualization" and develop a sense of "others' directness." Although some empirical research has placed the validity of this theory in some doubt, Maslow's work still has strong application in management practice in terms of motivation to help others or motivation to public service (Rainey, 2009).

A case in point is Maslow's concept of ego-transcendence (1954, p. 154), which raises interesting questions about why some people might decide to work in the public sector. For example, do some people choose the public sector for reasons other than serving others and pursuing the public good? Is it possible to separate "ego-oriented" individuals (who join the public sector because they pursue power, recognition and/or illegal rents) from others who are more willing to serve their fellow citizens? In this way Maslow's approach still offers insights into the analysis of how personal traits affect job sector choices.

Later, in 1960, Douglas McGregor argued that employees are motivated by either the traditional view of authoritative direction and control (Theory X) or by his model of integration and self-control (Theory Y). McGregor defined integration as the leading concept behind Theory Y, that is the creation of conditions such that the members of the organization can best achieve their own goals by directing their efforts towards the success of the enterprise (2006, p. 68). These elements of McGregor's perspective can provide critical input in terms of public employment in societies like Colombia's, where distrust in civil services remains high and thus

attractiveness to such jobs can be low. How can concepts such as integration be applied to attract workers within these contexts? How should we allow for integration in public sector organizations? These elements of McGregor's work can help in the design of strategies for attracting talented workers to the public sector.

In *The Achieving Society* (1961) McClelland asserts that achievement motivation explains economic growth in some nations. In his theory achievement is understood as a sense of mastery over one's environment through success defined by achieving goals using one's own craftiness, abilities and efforts. According to McClelland this is a characteristic of people attracted to managerial roles. How can these elements be applied to the public sector? Is it possible that people with achievement motivation can be more attracted to leading roles in government? My sample comprises people with international skills ready to occupy the higher echelons of organizations in all sectors. Is achievement motivation an attractor to public sector jobs for these people? I take into account some elements of this achievement approach in answering the question of the effect of work motivation on job sector choices in chapter five.

Some elements of content theories provide interesting questions for my analysis of job sector choices in Colombia. For example, since individuals in my sample are highly qualified professionals – a scarce resource in Colombia – they are ready to take high-level positions in organizations in all sectors. In other words, they might have an important advantage in the labor market in order to choose jobs in any sector according to the signaling effect of international degrees. However, it might be possible that according to their high profile and the social demands of the country, they develop ego-transcendence through the experience of acquiring international education, thus becoming prone to taking jobs in the public or nonprofit sectors after graduate education abroad. On the other hand, and considering Maslow's insights, it is

important to ask people to what extent Colombian public organizations provide the conditions that facilitate the achievement of individuals' goals through certain job attributes? These two elements are taken into consideration in my explorative qualitative analysis in chapter five.

Process theories attempt to explain the mechanisms whereby motivation operates and exerts an influence on worker behavior. These perspectives have become particularly influential in recent works about motivation in public management, particularly regarding goal congruence and equity theory. Among these theories are Vroom (1964) and valence-instrumentality expectancy theory; Adams (1965, 1976) and equity theory; Locke and Bryan (1967), Locke and Latham (1990, 2002) and goal-setting theory. Some of these approaches also inform my analysis of determinants of job sector choices in countries like Colombia.

According to Vroom's model, individual behavior is subjectively rational in that it is oriented towards the achievement of desired outcomes and the avoidance of undesirable ones. In terms of worker motivation, if a worker sees high productivity as a path leading to the attainment of personal goals, he will tend to be a high producer. Conversely, if the worker sees low productivity as a path to the achievement of personal goals then he will tend to be a low producer. In this framework the worker makes choices based on his or her expectation of how well the results match with the desired results. In this way, it is possible that individuals choose a public sector job because they feel that the results of that work will match their expectations of public service.

John Stacy Adams (1965, 1976) provided a powerful theory of distributive justice in order to explain how inequity can become a driver of worker behavior. Equity or inequity can elicit human actions and behavior in order to change an undesirable situation. In terms of job sector choice, it might be possible that equity theory can help us analyze the way individuals

compare other sectors or decide to leave a sector when a sense of inequity is present. For instance, it might be useful to understand how stronger competition from other sectors attracts skilled employees and can make workers more likely and able to compare salaries, benefits and types of contracts, thus providing them with greater opportunities for elaborating parallels and establishing a sense of equity in their own jobs.

Locke and Bryan (1967) and Locke and Latham (1990, 2002) find a positive relationship between goal difficulty and performance. Specific/difficult goals lead to better task performance than vague/easy goals. In other words, setting hard goals is more effective than asking people to do their best. Goal setting theory has provided a new way to understand work motivation. Indeed, Wright (2001) sees it as a promising alternative for the greater development of work motivation theories in the public sector.

Public sector jobs have been characterized as having abstract, diffuse and contradicting goals; this is even more certain in the case of public sectors in developing countries like Colombia. Therefore, it might be possible that some individuals, who prefer harder goals or become more motivated by them, are more likely to choose public sector jobs. Additionally, since public sector jobs can be challenging in terms of external pressures, problems and timing, is it possible that such elements, rather than expelling them, actually attract certain workers and can help to retain experienced individuals who feel the allure of uncertainty and complex organizational contexts in the public sector?

#### **2.2.4.2      *Job Attributes and Job Sector Choice***

Job Characteristics Theory originates with Lawler and Hackman (1973) and was later expanded in the book *Work Redesign* by Hackman and Oldham (1980). From their perspective jobs themselves can generate dissatisfaction among workers that cannot necessarily be explained

by motivation practices, training and the like. Here the job itself is key to employee motivation and can be restructured and redesigned in order to encourage productivity and work quality.

The authors aim to answer the question of how satisfactory person-job relationships are in contemporary organizations. They assert that while organizations have become increasingly mechanistic and controlling of individual behavior, the work force has become more educated and susceptible to intrinsic motives (1980, p. 8). While traditional approaches assume that people work efficiently in standardized and stable routinized jobs, Hackman and his colleagues argue that static or poorly designed jobs rule out motivation and thus affect productivity. They describe motivating jobs as those displaying skill variety, task significance and identity, autonomy and feedback from the job. Job redesign should pursue such features. Redesigned jobs will be able to generate outcomes such as higher work motivation, further general job satisfaction and greater effectiveness.

As discussed in chapter one, there has been a generational change in peoples' preferences and expectations concerning jobs, a change that has affected the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer. The work by Lawler, Hackman and Oldham offers clear tools for analyzing how that phenomenon can be exploited so as to attract (and retain) talented people in the public sector. This theory provides a framework for answering questions regarding the ability of the public sector to offer jobs that fulfill the expectations of highly qualified people. For instance, has the Colombian public sector provided enriched jobs to highly skilled candidates? What job attributes do the individuals take into consideration when making the decision of joining a particular sector? The theory of work redesign provides theoretical elements that I use in the qualitative analysis of job attributes in chapter five.



Albert Bandura defined the concept of self-efficacy: “Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (1997, p. 3). In terms of motivation self-efficacy plays a pivotal role since individuals pursue enterprises according to their self-efficacy beliefs. Bandura’s approach can also have implications for job sector choice. For instance, one might ask whether individuals with high levels of perceived self-efficacy are more or less attracted to particular work settings or even to particular sectors. Some individuals are less tolerant to the slow pace that public decisions and actions usually exhibit. They are less likely to remain in organizations that show less proactivity or are more exposed to political interference. This can be usual in the context of a country like Colombia where the performance of public organizations is frequently questioned (Carlson & Payne, 2003). It might then be possible that certain individuals are less attracted by the complex contexts of public organizations and respond to the allure of more performance-based organizations in, for instance, the private sector.

Newstrom, Reif and Monczka (1976) aim to examine “myths” and stereotypes regarding work motivation among public employees. They analyze employees in five private organizations and one municipal public organization, mostly by analyzing differences in terms of preferences for certain job attributes. The authors find two main differences between public and private employees. Job security and direct economic benefits appear as less relevant for public workers, implying “that the public employees in this study have moved beyond the basic physiological and security needs as primary motivators” (1976, p. 70).

Such a study provides some input for the analysis of job sector choices, particularly focusing on the public sector. For instance, it can help to answer questions such as, what kind of rewards do current workers and potential candidates expect to find in the public sector job in

Colombia? Likewise, if it is true that public employees share these basic motivators, has the Colombian public sector identified the kind of motivators that these individuals are seeking? Since the Colombian public sector lacks specific strategies for attracting individuals to public jobs it makes sense to analyze what those job attributes are that operate as attractors of individuals to the public sector (beyond the traditionally identified job security or even salary) and what elements appear to discourage employment in this sector. I aim to explore these issues in the qualitative analysis.

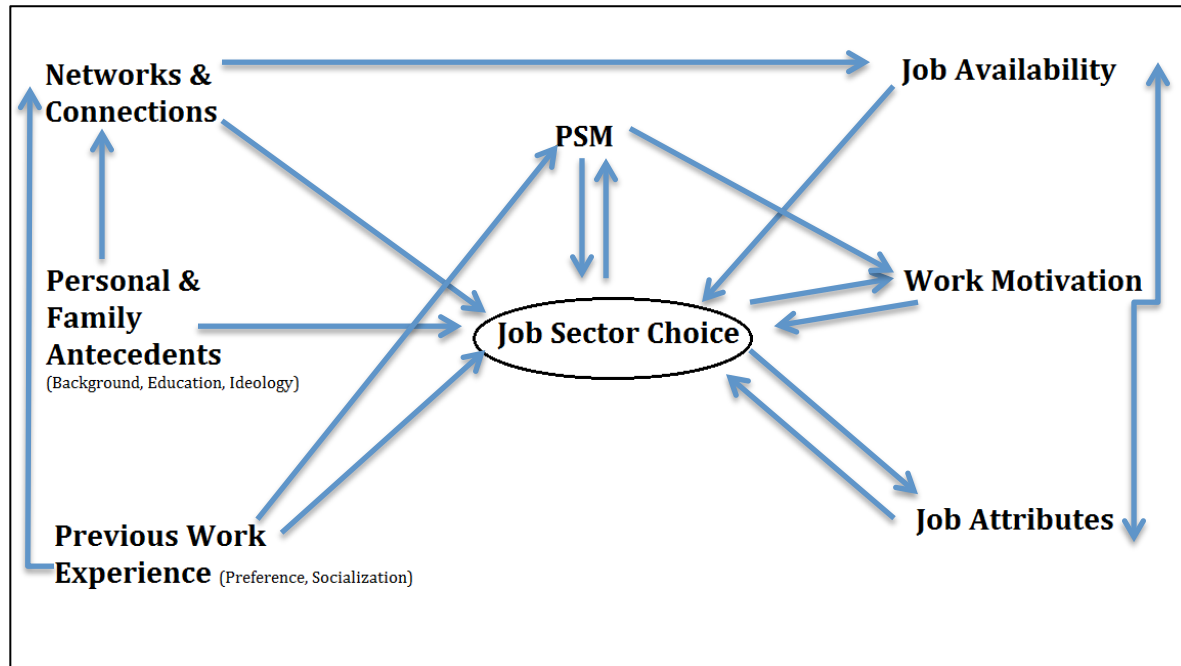
The introduction of these theories provides the framework for my analysis of my third and fourth research questions:

Third Research Question: What is the role of personal antecedents, job attributes and work motivation on job choices in Colombia?

Fourth Research Question: What role do these factors play in the decision to join (or not join) the Colombian public sector?

The literature reviewed serves as the theoretical framework for my understanding of the determinants of job sector choices. More specifically, in order to provide answers for the research questions of this work I rely on the theoretical model by Wright (2001, p. 560), which defines a set of elements (and their respective relationships) that affect work motivation. However, I adapt that model in order to purport that the elements highlighted in the literature review determine (or at least influence) the employment sector choices of individuals (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. A Model of Determinants of Job Sector Choice**



These are the elements that I will explore in this dissertation as the determinants of job sector choices within a group of Colombians. Public service motivation, some personal and family antecedents, and previous work experience are said to have a direct influence on job sector choices. Since these are elements that are quantifiable I include them in the quantitative model for analysis in chapter four accordingly. Although some previous works illustrate how sector choice may also define PSM (endogeneity), it might be less important in this case since socialization processes can also take place in other sectors. Consequently, I include in my model previous experience in the public sector as an explanatory variable.

The remaining elements (networks and connections, work motivation, job attributes) have a clear qualitative character, and so I explore them through interviews in chapter five. Some of

these elements (both measurable and immeasurable) have, from the theory, interesting interrelationships among them. For example, PSM has consistently been found to affect sector choice but has been said to also affect outcomes such as work motivation. Likewise, personal background and previous work experience can each also have an effect over networks and connections, which are in turn influential in the availability of jobs. According to this, I provide a mixed methods approach in an attempt to reach a more comprehensive response regarding the elements that explain job sector choices in a developing country like Colombia.

## **2.3 Conclusions**

This set of theories and approaches provide useful elements for my analysis of the determinants of job sector choice in Colombia. First, regarding economic approaches to job sector choice early research assumes that private and public sector workers are equal in terms of monetary (and even nonmonetary) rewards and so randomly sorted across sectors according to the presence of efficiency wages. According to this limitation, later research aims to expand understanding towards not only recognizing differences in the sorting of individuals across sectors, but also considerations of exogenous factors that affect job sector choices. Still, it seems that there has been very little dialogue between public administration approaches to the issue and those of the science of economics. However, understanding the role of salary can still shed light on the differences that appear across sectors, now, in the context of a country such as Colombia.

Second, initial studies into public administration that aimed to understand job sector choice focused on socio-demographic factors as determinants of sector decisions. Although these works might appear basic today they offer a rich methodological ground for more recent studies of job sector choice, which have gone beyond including personal values and attitudes towards work. Those initial approaches have influenced the design of models and the selection of

required variables in the understanding of job sector decisions. Moreover, this literature has enriched analyses by identifying determinants that have consistently been found to affect job sector choice, for instance the attraction of women, young people, people with high levels of education, and so on. Such determinants can still be consistently found in later studies that have built more robust models of job sector choice and provide elements for my research in terms of explanatory aspects, all of which will be taken into account.

Third, public values and attraction to public service literature suggests a solid basis for the understanding of how some attitudes and values in public service operate as attractors of people to particular sector jobs. Like in other areas reviewed, this kind of research is still scarce in developing countries yet is required in order to widen our understanding of public sector employment. Although the stringent conditions of a country like Colombia (for example, poverty and inequality, violence, drug trafficking, related crime, corruption) can expel some individuals out to other labor markets, they might also imply that some individuals develop a sense of duty to help the country solve such difficult problems, so that they look for organizations where they can fulfill their public values. Since there is a high sensibility regarding societal problems in developing countries like Colombia, public sector organizations can be attractive for those individuals who more easily find congruence between their personal values and public sector goals.

Regarding PSM scholarship, most research has found a positive relationship between PSM and public sector employment, mainly in developed countries. However, more recent research has also found evidence that PSM affects the decision to work in other sectors. In fact, recent research has advanced towards an understanding of PSM as a means to, rather than an end of, value congruence. Furthermore, whereas earlier works aim to understand why people chose a

particular sector, later works aim to improve the understanding of the effect of PSM on job sector choice by exploring elements related to the compatibility of the individual with the organization and the job.

Fourth, organizational elements have also been considered in the understanding of job sector choices and have in fact enriched public management scholarship by offering useful theoretical approaches. Generic work motivation content theories can help us to understand job sector choices by asking questions such as, when an individual starts to develop a sense of altruism and helping others, who is more likely to achieve a managerial role and, what aspects of the organization can help the individual to develop all his or her potential? On the other hand, process theories have provided elements for understanding how personal and organizational goals can match one another, what role a sense of equity plays in individual performance and how certain kinds of goals can increase motivation. All these elements have started to influence public management scholarship about sector choices.

In the same vein, other theories and approaches have aimed to disentangle the roles that job attributes and job design play in certain organizational outcomes. Although they are not directly related to job sector choice, they provide useful elements that can help us to separate the process of choosing a job from the later process of socialization and work motivation. For example, these approaches have helped to tackle issues like how elements such as task diversity and autonomy lead to better performance, how ideas of self-efficacy can define who is more likely to take a managerial role, and what kind of attributes are preferred across a group of public officials.

To summarize, this set of studies regarding job sector choice provides a wide perspective on the approaches that have aimed to understand why and how people choose a work sector.

Both economic and socio-demographic approaches started on an interesting path that has now allowed the identification of factors that determine the attraction of certain individuals to different sectors. Later approaches have refined the analysis and have added important explanatory variables that help to obtain a more profound view of the process of job sector decisions. The introduction of the concept of public service motivation, the use of further theoretical frameworks like the person-environment fit, and the utilization of more sophisticated methods and research designs, have enriched the ability of the field to disentangle that process. These elements constitute the framework that I adopt in my analysis of job sector choices. Even though these approaches are mostly related to situations in developed countries they provide a strong theoretical structure for this effort. Furthermore, the main contribution of my research endeavor is to adopt these elements within an unexplored context, a process that can provide useful insights for the comparative analysis of job sector choices from an empirical perspective.

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Overview and Purpose**

As with most research within the field of public administration scholarship, this study is an example of applied empirical research addressing an actual government problem (McNabb, 2008). Yet it can be also understood as a test of theoretical research, since it aims to explore and re-test a set of theoretical constructs regarding job sector choices. What is the purpose of my research? In this dissertation I attempt to analyze the reasons that make a highly skilled individual more or less likely to choose a particular sector of work, with particular interest in the public sector. I also analyze the relationship between motivational factors and such decisions. In doing so I hope to achieve a greater implicit goal, namely to analyze the attractiveness of the government as an employer of choice in Colombia. I target my research towards the understanding of those elements that can explain job sector choices in a developing country. Moreover, I aim to provide some insights into human capital management practices and the attractiveness of the government as an employer.

More importantly, my research explores job sector choice (and the attractiveness of the government as an employer of choice) in a different context from those most frequently seen in public administration empirical scholarship, that is, in the context of a developing country. In general, developing countries do not exhibit a long tradition of empirical public management scholarship and this situation is particularly evident in the case of Latin American countries. Therefore, my research aims to advance public management knowledge by expanding the analysis of theories already tested in the context of more advanced societies towards less



explored settings. At the same time it attempts to improve practice and provide ideas for the actions of governments in countries like Colombia.

To achieve this purpose I pursue a mixed research strategy, relying on both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the job sector choices of highly skilled people. Recent research in public administration has increasingly relied on mixed methods in order to reconcile the weaknesses and advantages of each approach and to create a complementary and more comprehensive perspective (McNabb, 2008). On the one hand, multivariate statistical techniques provide the grounds for establishing relationships among factors such as demographic characteristics, motivational factors and job antecedents in the particular sector choices of individuals. On the other hand, qualitative methods will allow me to obtain direct input from the subjects of my research to see how elements such as job attributes and work motivation have affected previous job decisions.

In the following section I provide a review of the research goals and research questions that have guided this dissertation project. I then offer a description of the quantitative and qualitative approaches that comprise my research approach, as well as a description of the methods and main activities that I will undertake as part of each strategy. Later, I go on to explore ethical considerations. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of my research strategy and some conclusions.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The unit of analysis is the individual participant. As noted above, I use both quantitative and qualitative methods to test the hypotheses regarding the determinants of job sector choices, with a special interest in understanding the elements that explain why an individual chooses a career in the public sector. In the following sections I describe how I collected and analyzed the

quantitative and qualitative data respectively, describing the instruments used in each effort. I will also describe the main steps in the implementation of the research strategy for each approach. I will start by illustrating the main activities of the quantitative analysis before moving on to the qualitative approach.

### **3.1.1 Quantitative Analysis**

The purpose of the quantitative effort is to provide statistical evidence regarding the determinants of job sector choices (a dependent variable) for highly qualified individuals in Colombia. I attempt to achieve this purpose by using socio-demographic data, educational background information, and work-related information as my independent and control variables. I do so with a special interest in those elements that explain public sector employment according to previous research. I analyze the role of PSM on job sector choices, which means that this project will measure PSM (for the first time in Colombia) in order to introduce it as the main independent variable in the model.

#### **3.1.1.1 *Data Sources and Sample***

Quantitative information comes from the Colombian scholarship program Colfuturo, the organizers of which allowed the researcher remote access to their administrative files. This organization's archives contain socio-demographic, educational and work experience data for those individuals who were granted the Colfuturo scholarship-loan. The data provides enough information for the dependent variable and for most of the independent variables used in previous public management literature regarding job sector choices. Yet in order to reduce omitted variable bias in my model, additional information (not contained in the Colfuturo database) was included to control for other confounding factors. Therefore, although I obtained

most information for the dependent and independent variables from Colfuturo's administrative records, I collected additional data using survey methods.

In terms of time, the information used in this project can be divided into pre-study abroad (independent variables) and sector of work after study abroad (dependent variable). In terms of the sources of these data, most pre-study abroad information (socio-demographic, employment and educational data) comes from the application documents (that is, application form, CV, statement of purpose, work certifications and transcripts). These documents, contained in the electronic database of Colfuturo, provide most of the required information for my independent variables.

Colfuturo also provided post-study employment information. Upon their return to the country, individuals who received Colfuturo scholarships are required to report their employment information in order to establish the percentage of the scholarship to be waived and the amount to be repaid. Since Colfuturo also helps them to re-enter the job market, the organization collects data regarding employer, salary, position, and so on. This is the main source of information for my dependent variable, a polytomous four-category variable (public, nonprofit, private and academic) that reflects the sector of employment chosen by the individuals when they re-enter the job market after graduate education abroad.

The data was collected through remote online access to Colfuturo's database from October 2009 to November 2011. The database contains application forms, statements of purpose, job certifications and grade transcripts from Colfuturo fellows. As mentioned before, most socio-demographic information comes from Colfuturo's application form, which all the applicants file during the application process. Other information like sector of preference after

study abroad, salary and undergraduate GPA comes from the statement of purpose, from job certifications and university transcripts respectively.

Since I still required supplementary individual information that cannot be obtained from Colfuturo's records, I designed a survey targeting all Colfuturo recipients from 2002 to 2007. I also took advantage of the survey in order to collect additional individual information regarding political ideology, socio-economic and family background and antecedents, as well as further information regarding job sector preferences and job attributes.

### **3.1.1.2        *Survey Instrument***

I administered the online survey to the 967 Colfuturo program recipients in the period of analysis in order to obtain information not included in Colfuturo's administrative records (see survey instrument in Appendix A). As mentioned before, the primary purposes of the survey were to capture socio-demographic information not included in Colfuturo's records, to obtain insights regarding political preferences and job attributes from individuals in the sample and, most importantly, to measure PSM through an abbreviated version of James Perry's (1996, 1997) instrument.

More specifically, I aimed to collect socio-demographic information, political ideology, preferred job attributes and public service motivation. First, I included in the survey one question regarding socio-economic status. In this case "estrato socio-económico," which represents a scale that classifies Colombian households according to their socio-economic status. I also included additional questions in the survey about each parent's background and the type of secondary school attended (public, private, bilingual).

Second, I also included a seven point Likert-type question asking the participants to place themselves on a left to right ideology spectrum, as well as an additional question inquiring about

their three most preferred job attributes from a list of 15 different items. I constructed this list of attributes according to attributes previously analyzed in Vandenabeele (2008) and Lewis and Frank (2002). This additional information regarding socio-economic background, political and employment preferences allowed me to control for factors that have the strong potential to affect both job sector decisions (Y) and other elements such as work motivation and PSM (X).

The survey also served to achieve an overriding element in my research, namely the measurement of PSM. In order to do so I used a reduced form of Perry's scale, whereby the original 40 items were reduced to the five that were also selected for inclusion on the 1996 Merit Principles Survey. Previous studies have used the reduced-form scale (Naff & Crum, 1999; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Stazyk, 2009), which has been proved to capture correctly the general and specific components of the original 40-item instrument (Stazyk, 2009, p. 15). The five items used for PSM measurement appear in Appendix A, questions 1 to 5.

The PSM items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). Since I conducted the survey in Spanish, two different bilingual (Spanish–English) translators translated the items before conducting the pilot in order to ensure that the items and questions were consistent across both languages. Beyond the actual translation from English to Spanish, both translators aimed to adapt it to the Colombian dialect and context. In order to increase accuracy I also compared the final translation with the Spanish translation used in a Ph.D. Dissertation by a Chilean scholar from the University of Southern California (Pliscoff, 2009) and found a high number of similarities, with some minor dialect adaptations in the Chilean case.

### **3.1.1.3      *Survey Application, Sample and Representativeness***

Initially, I applied the survey to a pilot of 12 individuals who were purposively identified as holding similar characteristics to the individuals in my sample. All the individuals included in the pilot sample provided feedback about the length and duration of the survey, the clarity of questions and the organization of the survey. Their feedback was especially useful in reducing technical jargon and improving adaptation to the Colombian dialect, particularly for those questions translated from English, such as with the PSM items.

To facilitate access to the sample for the survey, Colfuturo provided the researcher with a database that included the e-mail addresses of the 2002 to 2007 recipients, which was later updated by the researcher. After the update and the application of some amendments according to the feedback of the participants in the pilot project I sent an email to all 967 individuals in the sample on August 31, 2011. From that day onwards the survey was live on a website for online surveys and I kept it accessible for the next six weeks until mid October. After the first contact, I sent an e-mail reminder to each participant each week during the following six weeks in order to secure the greatest possible response rate. These activities led to a response rate of 43%. I finally closed the survey on October 15, 2011. Following this an assistant researcher coded the results and incorporated them into the main dataset during the subsequent two months.

The survey was responded to by N=419 individuals out of the 967 census of individuals who received a Colfuturo scholarship-loan during the period 2002 to 2007. In terms of representativeness, I found no significant evidence of statistical differences between respondents and non-respondents in terms of age and undergraduate GPA. However, there is significant evidence of a difference in terms of salaries. This implies that my results might not necessarily extrapolate to those individuals with higher incomes, although certainly the difference does not exceed 17% (see Table 3). This situation is, however, not unusual in surveys of people with high

levels of income for whom the opportunity cost of time is high and therefore, are less willing to respond to online surveys.

**Table 3. Test of Means**

Variable	Mean Non-Respondents	Mean Respondents	t [ $\mu \neq \mu$ ]
Age (years)	28.9	29.0	-0.275
Undergraduate GPA (0.0-5.0)	4.09	4.07	1.582
Salary (in Colombian pesos)	3,090,699	2,630.300	3.036

### 3.1.1.4 *Statistical Model*

My dependent variable contains the following categories: 1) Public sector, 2) nonprofit sector, 3) private sector and 4) academia, thus reflecting the job sector choices of the individual when re-entering the market after graduate education abroad. Because of the polytomous characteristic of the dependent variable I employed maximum likelihood methods, namely a multinomial logistic (MNL) model, to estimate the parameters of the empirical model. MNL is recommended for estimations with dependent variables with more than two non-ordered categories. Therefore, I used MNL to analyze the decisions of individuals in the nonprofit, private and academic sectors, using public sector employment as the baseline group.

According to the characteristics of MNL models, and considering that I have a four-category variable (k) with three equations (k-1), the statistical model can be expressed as:

$$\text{Prob}(Y = j) = \frac{\exp(\beta_j X_i)}{\sum_j \exp(\beta_j X_i)}$$

In this case, j=1,2,3,4 represent the four categories of the dependent variable I used in the statistical model (public sector, nonprofit sector, private sector and academia). i=1...N are

indexes of the individuals in the sample and  $X$  is a vector of the independent variables that I describe more deeply in section 3.2.1.6.

According to this, the system of equations will be given by:

$$(1) \text{ Prob } (Y = \textit{Public}) = \frac{\exp(\beta_1 X_i)}{\exp(\beta_1 X_i) + \exp(\beta_2 X_i) + \exp(\beta_3 X_i) + \exp(\beta_4 X_i)}$$

$$(2) \text{ Prob } (Y = \textit{Nonprofit}) = \frac{\exp(\beta_2 X_i)}{\exp(\beta_1 X_i) + \exp(\beta_2 X_i) + \exp(\beta_3 X_i) + \exp(\beta_4 X_i)}$$

$$(3) \text{ Prob } (Y = \textit{Private}) = \frac{\exp(\beta_3 X_i)}{\exp(\beta_1 X_i) + \exp(\beta_2 X_i) + \exp(\beta_3 X_i) + \exp(\beta_4 X_i)}$$

$$(1) \text{ Prob } (Y = \textit{Academia}) = \frac{\exp(\beta_4 X_i)}{\exp(\beta_1 X_i) + \exp(\beta_2 X_i) + \exp(\beta_3 X_i) + \exp(\beta_4 X_i)}$$

I aim to apply the usual tests required for maximum likelihood methods, that is, the Wald test and the likelihood ratio for the significance of coefficients from the MNL estimation. Moreover, according to the characteristics of the MNL model, and in order to ensure the Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives (IIA), I conduct additional tests on the original model. IIA tests are required to ensure that changing the number of alternatives in the dependent variable does not change the odds of the other alternatives. Therefore, as is usually required in multinomial logit approaches, I performed the Hausman test and the Small-Hsiao test.

Yet an important caveat must be made here. Since I cluster the observations according to the year that the individual received the Colfuturo scholarship, the statistical software Stata does not allow the IIA tests to be performed. Since both clustering and the IIA tests are important, I



still perform the tests to the same specifications without clustering, even though the alternatives (sector choices) are evidently independent. I then perform the estimations with clusters, which I eventually include in chapter four, since the year effect can be important in the decisions of people to join a particular sector (for example, political events, national crisis, and so on).

After the MNL estimation I calculated marginal effects in order to estimate, as defined by Cameron and Trivedi (2008) and Baum (2006), the effect that a change in one of the regressors has on the conditional mean of the dependent variable. The Mean Marginal Effect (MME) (or the Average Marginal Effect) provides us with the average effect of those changes on the mean of Y. According to this the differentiating equation (dy/dx) of the marginal effect is given by:

$$\frac{\partial P_j}{\partial X_k} = P_j(\beta_{jk} - \sum_{j=1}^{J-1} P_j \beta_{jk})$$

Marginal effects help to overcome the difficulty of interpreting multinomial logit coefficients, since they calculate the expected change in probability (given a particular choice made) with respect to a unit change in the independent variable, that is to say the derivative (dy/dx). For interval/ratio variables the marginal effect is obtained from the derivative of the equation with respect to each of the regressors, while for dummy variables the marginal effect represents the discrete change from value 0 to 1. Moreover, MME is convenient because it provides the individual effect separately for each category of the dependent variable (public, nonprofit, private, academia).

### **3.1.1.5 Variables and Descriptive Statistics**

I incorporated the variables in the statistical model according to previous literature that has aimed to explain job sector choices (Table 4). As mentioned before, the dependent variable

reflects the sector of the first job that the individuals take when they re-enter the market after study abroad. This allows me to analyze different determinants of sector choice across four different sectors, specifically public, nonprofit, private and academia.

Regarding independent variables and controls I rely on the literature to build the model. To begin with I include public service motivation in the model – obtained from the online survey of Colfuturo graduates – as the main independent variable. PSM has been found to have a positive relationship with public sector employment in several studies (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Groeneveld, Steijn & van der Parre, 2009; Vandenabeele, 2008; Wright & Pandey, 2008). More recently, PSM has also been found to not be a monopoly of the public sector, since it appears also to affect selection in nonprofit jobs, and to a lesser extent certain service-oriented private sector jobs (Gabris & Simo, 1995; Steen, 2008; Wright & Christensen 2010).

As stated earlier, I include socio-demographic controls in the statistical model, just as most previous literature has done (Christensen & Wright, 2009; Wright & Christensen, 2010). I also include the logarithm of salary before study abroad, which has not been frequently included in previous models. Considering input from economic theories, I also incorporate into the model a variable for salary dispersion, which I created as a dummy variable with the value of 1 for those individuals whose own salary is greater or equal to the average salary of those individuals in the public sector (in the sample). Likewise, I add one independent variable regarding the kind of contracts they were offered after study abroad. Finally, I also include other antecedent variables regarding the respondents' parents' experiences as public officials and political participation (based on Perry, 1997) in the model, and I also control for the ideology of the individual.

Although I have already described PSM measurement in section 3.1.1.2 some other annotations can be made for the measurement of other variables. As mentioned before, sector choice is understood as a categorical variable with four different options. This structure allows the analysis of sector choice as containing relevant alternatives (exclusive categories). Accordingly, I follow the same structure for other variables such as sector of employment before study abroad and sector of employment preference. From the latter, I later create a dummy for public sector preference that identifies individuals who have stated a desire to work in the public sector. Since I include salary in the model, as is usual in this kind of model, I use the logarithm of the salary that the individual received before study abroad (the original salary is stated in Colombian currency). I also use the original salary data in Colombian pesos in order to create the aforementioned mentioned dispersion variable.

Another variable that deserves mention in terms of measurement is political ideology, which I measure using a seven-point scale. Political ideology is obtained from a survey question that inquires at what point, from left to right, the individuals locate themselves in the political spectrum. In terms of the relevance of such a measure in the Colombian context, it can be said that two different studies by Payne et al. (2003) and Rodriguez-Raga (2007) have already used a similar measure (for example, the individual self-reference spectrum from 1 to 10).

**Table 4. Dependent and Independent Variables**

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Source</b>
<i>Job sector choice in the first job after study abroad:</i> A polytomous variable with four categories: 1) Public, 2) Nonprofit, 3) Private, 4) Academia.	Colfuturo Administrative Records
<b>Main Independent Variable</b>	
<i>Public Service Motivation:</i> By means of the five-item scale of Perry's (1996) instrument,	Online Survey of Colfuturo

Dependent Variable	Source
applied in the survey, I will create an index of PSM for each observation.	Graduates 2002-2007
<b>Other Independent and Control Variables</b>	
<u>Age</u> : Number of years at the moment of applying to the scholarship.	Colfuturo Administrative Records
<u>Male Gender</u> : Dummy variable, male=1, female=0.	
<u>Undergraduate GPA</u> : Grade Point Average. Colombian grade scale, ranks from 0.0 to 5.0.	
<u>Type of University</u> : Undergraduate university sector, public=1, private=0.	
<u>Logarithm of Salary Before Study Abroad</u> : Logarithm of the salary reported by the individual to Colfuturo at the moment of application to the scholarship.	
<u>Wage Dispersion</u> : A dummy variable, if (Wage <sub>i</sub> /Average Wage public sector)>1, then takes a value of 1, 0=otherwise.	
<u>Public Sector Experience</u> : Months of experience in the public sector before studying abroad.	
<u>Preference for Public Sector Employment Before Study Abroad</u> : A dummy variable with 1=those who expressed a preference for public sector employment in their Colfuturo application statement of purpose, 0=those who expressed a preference for jobs in other sectors.	
<u>Graduate Program in Public Affairs</u> : Dummy for graduate program abroad in public affairs: 1=Program in public affairs, 0=otherwise. In this category were included those programs with the following words in the title/name of the degree: Public, policy, planning, government, urban planning, urbanism, social policy, regulation.	Online Survey of Colfuturo Graduates 2002-2007
<u>Graduate Program in Business</u> : Dummy for graduate program abroad in Business and related areas (finance, management, marketing): 1= Program in business, 0=otherwise.	
<u>Type of Contract After Study Abroad</u> : This is a dichotomous variable that asks individuals whether they get a job with 1=indefinite term contract, 0=fixed term contract, both in the first and second jobs after study abroad.	
<u>Parent Public Official</u> : A dummy variable with 1=those individuals whose father or mother are/were public officials, 0=otherwise.	
<u>Parent Participation in Political Activities</u> : A dummy variable with 1=those individuals whose father or mother have had any participation in political activities, 0=otherwise.	
<u>Ideology</u> : A seven-point scale with values of ranging from 1=Left to 7=Right.	

**Table 5. Sample Characteristics (n=419)**

Variable	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	37.3
Male	62.7
<b>Undergraduate university</b>	
Public	36.8
Private	63.2
<b>Sector of employment (before study abroad)</b>	
Public	17.8
Nonprofit	7.7
Private	46.3
Academia	28.2
<b>Sector of employment (after study abroad)</b>	
Public	13.2
Nonprofit	7.0
Private	47.7
Academia	32.1
<b>Individuals with indefinite-term job contracts (after study abroad)</b>	
Public Sector	47.3
Nonprofit	34.5
Private Sector	72.9
Academia	36.6
<b>Graduate area of study abroad</b>	
Engineering	23.2
Other Social Sciences	12.9
Business	12.2
Public Affairs	11.9
Architecture and Urban Studies	8.4
Sciences	7.8
Political Science and International Relations	6.4
Economics	6.2
Law	6.2
Fine Arts	5.3
Agricultural and Environmental Studies	5.3
Health	3.6
Education	3.4
<b>Previous preference for sector of employment</b>	
Public Sector	12.1
Public Sector and/or Other Sectors	31.7
Nonprofit	0.7
Private	33.9
Academia	31.7
<b>Family Background</b>	
Percentage of Individuals whose father or mother was involved in politics	10.7
Percentage of Individuals whose father or mother worked with the government	43.7
<b>Wage Dispersion</b>	
Percentage of Individuals with Salaries Greater than Public Sector Average	32.2

According to the descriptive statistics (Table 5), most respondents in the sample are men, people who went to public universities and individuals who work in the private sector. The data regarding public sector work shows how there is attrition within the public sector after study abroad, since the proportion of individuals working in the public sector drops from 17.8% to 13.2% of the sample. On the other hand, almost 12 of every 100 Colfuturo fellows pursue graduate education in public affairs related programs, while the most frequent areas of study in the sample are engineering, other social sciences and business. In terms of sector preference, the most preferred sector according to the statements of purpose is the private sector.

**Table 6. Some Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
Age (Years)	29.0	4.54	23	49
Public Sector Experience Before Study Abroad (Months)	13.5	29.5	0	271
Salary Before (log. Colombian pesos)	14.6	0.75	11.1	16.8
Undergraduate GPA (0.0-5.0)	4.07	0.25	3.37	5
Public Service Motivation (5-25)	18.9	3.2	5	25
Ideology (1 Left -> 7 Right)	3.91	0.94	1	7

In terms of descriptive statistics (Table 6), the average individual was 29 years of age, had almost a year of public sector experience before leaving the country to study abroad, and received an average salary of 2,600,000 Colombian pesos (1,530 US dollars). Colfuturo fellows can also be identified as top performers in terms of their academic GPA (above 80% in the Colombian grading system) with a relatively low standard deviation.

### **3.1.1.6        *Methodological Caveats and Limitations***

There are some methodological caveats that deserve mention at this point. First, my sample lacks external validity since the group of people who are able to study abroad through the Colfuturo program might not be representative of the entire population of professionals. However, this is exactly the focus of my study, a group of highly qualified individuals who benefit from the signaling effect that graduate education has in the labor market. According to the characteristics of the population my sample can actually be highly representative of the group of individuals who are better suited to top positions in all organizations across sectors, especially in the government, as the individuals included in the Colfuturo sample show.

What are the implications of this situation on the analysis of job sector choices? On the one hand, these individuals are characterized by the signaling effect of international educational degrees in the Colombian job market and so their decisions are certainly different from the typical worker who might probably exhibit a less ample array of employment options. Likewise, the demands of these highly qualified individuals can be higher than those of the average Colombian worker, considering their international experiences and socialization processes. On the other hand, they can still reflect certain patterns that are typical in the Colombian labor market, for instance the role of connections and cliques can be exacerbated across this group of individuals who are highly suited to take positions in the upper echelons of organizations. In any case, although external validity can be low, the analysis of their behaviors can provide a clear picture of the mechanisms through which the most qualified professionals choose sectors.

Second, in a similar vein and also related to external validity, this study is contingent on the particular conditions and characteristics of Colombia's government and society. Yet it can still shed light in terms of human resources policies, especially for other Latin American and developing countries with similar levels of development and analogous public administration

structures and features. Since the problem that motivates this dissertation is precisely the lack of empirical research on job sector choices, this work can encourage later projects in other Latin American and developing countries.

Third, the characteristics of the individuals in my sample are highly qualified people in top positions who are ordinarily less willing to devote time to respond to surveys. Therefore, the survey's response rate may be questionably low. The response rate was roughly 44%, which is beyond the usual minimum recommended level for this kind of study of 40%. Accordingly, I applied a t-test of means in order to confirm that the sample is representative of the census of 967 individuals who received Colfuturo scholarships between 2002 and 2007 and avoid sample bias. From the t-test I found no significant evidence of differences between respondents and non-respondents in terms of most observable characteristics.

Fourth, other reviewers might ask whether using a U.S. generated measure of PSM will be also appropriate for a developing country like Colombia. Existing international applications of Perry's PSM instrument have shown coherence with the general concept (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010). Additionally, the only known measurement applied in Latin America has reported adequate levels of convergence with mainstream applications of the instrument (Pliscoff, 2009).

Finally, since I conducted the survey and measured PSM some time after respondents had completed their education abroad, it might be possible that other experiences have affected their contemporary views (and motives). For instance, socialization can affect the levels of PSM according to the previous work experiences of individuals, particularly for those in service-oriented jobs.<sup>3</sup> As I mentioned in chapter two, although some previous works illustrate how sector choice may also define PSM through socialization (that is, endogeneity), it might be not

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<sup>3</sup> In this work I understand socialization as a process whereby the individual may learn and adapt organization goals and values through work experience.



highly worrisome in this case since the socialization process can also take place in other sectors. Correspondingly, I include in my model previous experience in the public sector as an explanatory variable.

Socialization is indeed an issue that the PSM literature has already reviewed (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Wright & Christensen, 2010) and so I added controls for previous work in the public sector and tested the model with another dependent variable for second job after study abroad. Yet according to complexities in the measurement of such a phenomenon, I also inquire about socialization and adjustment effects in the qualitative analysis of chapter five.

### **3.1.2 Qualitative Analysis**

According to McNabb (2008, p. 98) qualitative research approaches have the objective of understanding a particular phenomenon by analyzing the interactions of people with determined problems. As Luton (2010, p. 1) puts it, qualitative research allows the deep analysis of “small-N” research thus facilitating detailed knowledge of a limited sample, as opposed to the quantitative approach that aims to obtain more general knowledge from a large-N. That is exactly my intention in chapter five, namely to obtain detailed knowledge about the elements that explain job sector choices and job decisions among a group of highly qualified Colombians. In order to do so, I follow a grounded theory model of research.

Several authors in public administration have relied on the so-called grounded theory or “the discovery of theory from data” through “a general method of comparative analysis” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this qualitative analysis I use the concept in a more generic sense, as asserted by Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 1): “[T]o denote theoretical constructs from qualitative analysis of data.” I aim to identify categories, patterns and concepts related to job choice, work

motivation and job attributes from the qualitative data in order to provide a better explanation of individual choices and the role that such elements play in it.

Different scholars have pursued qualitative approaches in order to explore a wide array of public management issues: Bureaucratic politics (Brower & Abolafia, 1997); citizen participation (Simrell et al., 1998); contract design (Johnson-Dias & Maynard-Moody, 2006); green tape (DeHart-Davis, 2008); social capital and nonprofits (Weisinger & Salipante, 2005); street-level bureaucracy (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Lens 2009), public service motivation (Ritz, 2011). By allowing a two-way analysis between categories, concepts, patterns and the development of theory itself this methodology can help to generate insights regarding the determinants of job sector choices and the related abilities of the government as employer.

This methodology can also help overcome some elements in job decisions that cannot be entirely unraveled by quantitative methods. In other words, there are some individual elements of behavior that cannot be measured or quantified that are needed to explain the job sector decisions of talented workers. For instance, this method might help to disentangle the effect of previous decisions or individual and family antecedents, the role of loyalty, the design of the job itself, the fit with the organization, the job and the boss, all of which are elements that can be understood by asking individuals. At the individual level, qualitative methods will contribute to the analysis of the role of some factors that affect sector choices (preferences, personal tastes and abilities) but which are not likely to be inferred from statistical estimations.

The purpose of the qualitative chapter is to categorize those elements that affect job sector choices, such as antecedents, work motivation and fit with the organization and the job, with a special interest in the attractiveness of the Colombian public sector as an employer. I start by focusing on how work experiences and previous decisions, both pre- and post-study abroad,

affect individual job sector decision-making. Then I move to individual preferences regarding job attributes and individual motives to work. To do so I rely on semi-structured face-to-face interviews with a group of highly qualified individuals who work in different sectors and who have re-entered the job market after graduate education abroad. Some of the individuals in the qualitative sample come from the Colfuturo census 2002-2007 that I use for the quantitative estimations in this dissertation.

### ***3.1.2.1 Data and Sample***

In this qualitative analysis I aim to use categories from previous research and new categories obtained from the participants' responses, all of which can help explain why an individual chooses (or not) the public sector as an employer of choice. In particular, I focus on the moment when the interviewees re-enter the job market after graduate education abroad. I argue that this moment represents an inflection point in life in which some individuals confirm previous careers when re-entering the labor force (for example, some use their studies to advance their public or private sector careers), whereas others use the advantage to re-qualify and then switch to other sectors. Pursuing graduate international education therefore appears to be an opportunity for individuals to re-direct or enhance their previous job decisions.

I use purposive sampling in order to build the sample for interviews. I start by identifying some individuals in the quantitative dataset of Colfuturo and then, through these, I undertake snowballing to identify individuals with similar characteristics. Considering that in this section (chapter five) I focus on public sector employment, the main criterion for selection in my sample was identifying individuals who switched from or to the public sector or who did not work in the public sector before or after study abroad.

I have therefore interviewed eighteen Colombians who pursued graduate education abroad and identified these individuals within four main categories: a) Those who stayed in the public sector after graduate study abroad (N=5); b) those who shifted from the public sector to other sectors (N=4); c) those who shifted from other sectors to the public sector (N=4); and d) those who stayed in sectors other than the public sector after graduate education abroad (N=5).

The sample (N=18) did not aim at being representative of the whole population, nor at having high external validity, but rather it aimed to look for similarities/differences among people with similar educational levels and professional careers who have already made job sector choices, especially after pursuing studies abroad. Just as with the quantitative sample, this sample for qualitative analysis is highly representative of those individuals who have achieved top positions in the public sector and in other sectors.

### ***3.1.2.2 Interview Instrument and Application***

As mentioned earlier, I followed a semi-structured approach for interviews. The interview instrument (see Appendix B) has three major sections: a) Questions about previous job sector choices; b) social and personal aspects of job sector choices and preferences; and c) questions regarding work motivation and job attributes and preferences. In each of these sections I asked the individual about the elements that have affected his or her employment decisions after graduate education abroad. These data offered insights into the relative importance of the different qualitative elements that have been identified in prior literature as affecting job sector choices.

In terms of time, while in the quantitative approach I focused on one specific point in time when individuals re-enter the job market, in the qualitative analysis I take into consideration the whole job trajectory. I also consider the role of PSM and work motivation as dynamic

concepts. This allows me to incorporate the effect of previous job decisions on later ones, as well as to identify determinants of job sector choices not captured by the quantitative strategy.

In terms of the application of the instrument I contacted the individuals by e-mail and set appointments for conducting interviews in the cities of Bogotá, D.C. and Santiago de Cali in Colombia during the spring of 2011. I conducted eighteen semi-structured 60 to 90 minutes interviews in Spanish, which were later digitally recorded and transcribed. I translated the most relevant parts into English. All the interviewees signed forms of consent and I provided prior informed to them about the contents of the interview and the confidentiality of the information.

### **3.2 Ethical Considerations**

According to the importance and the sensitivity of the quantitative and qualitative information collected throughout this project (specifically, asking about job characteristics, salaries, preferences, individuals' views and opinions) I took all the measures necessary to ensure the confidentiality of the participants' information. Only the researcher and one research assistant had access to the data. Regarding quantitative data, both the researcher and the assistant signed confidentiality agreements with Colfuturo officials in order to ensure adequate confidentiality procedures in data management. In terms of the qualitative approach, this work followed the protocols suggested in the public administration literature (Luton, 2010; McNabb, 2008; Patton, 2002). Accordingly, I designed a guide to protocols and every single participant read his or her rights before signing a consent form.

### **3.3 Summary and Conclusion**

By combining both qualitative and quantitative strategies this research design aims to provide a holistic view of job sector choices. While quantitative data allows the analysis of statistical relationships between job sector determinants such as PSM and other factors as well, including personal backgrounds, the qualitative information provides a more in-depth analysis of other elements that cannot be measured or quantified along the career of the individual (particularly family and social background, job preferences and aspects of work motivation). So through the analysis of these elements I aim to test theories and concepts within the uncommon locus of public management empirical research in a developing country like Colombia.

The triangulation of methodologies offers a broader perspective on these decision-making processes. According to Patton, “Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods” (2002, p. 247), which is the main purpose that I pursue by mixing quantitative and qualitative methods in my methodological approach. While the quantitative analysis provides statistical evidence of the impact that each item has on the job sector choices of a group of talented individuals, qualitative methods allow me to inquire directly to similar individuals about the elements that have affected their job sector decisions and, more specifically, the decision to work in a public sector organization.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **JOB SECTOR CHOICE AND PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION: QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE FROM COLOMBIA**

In this chapter I examine the determinants of job sector choice with a particular interest in the role of public service motivation on such decisions. I use multinomial logit (MNL) to understand individuals' decisions to take jobs in one of four sectors: government, nonprofit, for-profit, or academia. As mentioned previously, the analysis is based on data about a sample of participants on the Colombian scholarship program, Colfuturo, drawn from between 2002 and 2007. The following subsection presents the overarching research questions that guide the analysis. The next subsection shows the main results of the econometric estimations, and finally I close the chapter with some conclusions and insights regarding these determinants.

#### **4.1 Research Questions**

This chapter uses quantitative methods to address the first two questions that motivate the study:

- 1) What are the determinants of individual decisions for entering careers in the government, nonprofit, for-profit, and academic sectors?
- 2) What is the role of public service motivation within that decision process?

In order to examine these questions I estimate a statistical model that uses an individual's job sector choice as the dependent variable. My independent variable of interest is public service motivation, which has been shown in the literature to be an important determinant of public sector employment (see Groeneveld et al., 2009; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Perry et al., 2010; Steijn, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2008; Vandenabeele, et al., 2004; Wright, 2001). The model also includes a series of control variables (socio-demographic factors) that previous research has found to be

related to public sector employment: Gender (Blank, 1985; Lewis & Frank, 2002); education (Blank, 1985; Stelener, 1989); age (Blank, 1985; Lewis & Frank, 2002) previous sector (Sue & Bozeman, 2009b); salary (Stelener et al., 1989; Van Ophem, 1993); and work experience (Wright & Christensen, 2010).

As mentioned in chapter three, I test this model using a sample of Colombian professionals who left the job market to pursue graduate education abroad and who afterwards re-entered the market and chose between different sectors of employment. The analysis will focus on the extent to which PSM is associated with the likelihood of an individual taking a job in the government, nonprofit, for-profit or academic sectors. As noted above and explained in greater detail in chapter two, I expect that higher levels of PSM will be associated with a higher propensity to take a job in the government or nonprofit sector and a lower propensity to take a job in the for-profit sector. Given the lack of research on the relationship between PSM and academia, I am unable to make a prediction as to whether it will be positive or negative.

## **4.2 Results**

As noted above in this chapter and in chapter three, I use multinomial logistic regression (MNL) to estimate the model, which is typical for dependent variables with more than two non-ordered categories. MNL will permit me to test the model in a couple of different ways. First, it will produce three sets of regression coefficients that show how each explanatory variable changes the probability of taking a job in the nonprofit, for-profit, and academic sectors by comparison to the public sector. Employment in the public sector is thus the reference group (or base outcome). For example, in the model for nonprofit versus public sector employment a positive coefficient shows that an increase in the explanatory variable is associated with a significantly higher probability of taking a job with a nonprofit organization in comparison to a



government agency. A negative coefficient would, on the other hand, demonstrate that an increase in the explanatory variable would correspond to a significantly lower probability of taking a job with a nonprofit by comparison to a government agency. These coefficients are by nature comparative, and a significant finding is interpreted as a difference in the likelihood of choosing one sector over the public sector (the reference group). They do not indicate a difference in the likelihood of choosing one sector over all other sectors.

Although regression coefficients are useful in identifying whether a difference in probability is statistically significant for a choice between two sectors, they are difficult to interpret substantively. In order to better understand the magnitudes of the relationships I calculate marginal effects. For interval/ratio variables the marginal effect (margin unit change  $dY/dX$ ) is obtained from the derivative of the equation with respect to each of the regressors, while for discrete variables the marginal effect represents a discrete change from value 0 to 1 (Long & Freese, 2006, p. 126). The marginal effects not only provide a more straightforward interpretation of the magnitudes, they are also a bit more intuitive because they discard the use of a reference group. Instead of showing the probability of taking a job in a given sector by comparison to the public sector (and thus omitting the two other sectors from consideration), the marginal effects demonstrate changes in the probability of taking a job in a given sector by comparison to all other sectors.

Table 7 displays both the MNL coefficients and corresponding marginal effects for each independent variable. I will begin by examining the MNL coefficients for PSM (the first three columns after the variables).<sup>4</sup> The coefficients show that individuals with higher levels of PSM

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<sup>4</sup> I will limit the discussion of MNL coefficients to the independent variable of interest, PSM. In the sections that follow I will discuss the statistically significant marginal effects for all of the explanatory variables.

are less likely to take a job in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors than they are to take a job in the public sector. Both of these relationships are statistically significant at the 5% level.

**Table 7. Determinants of Job Sector Choice**

Independent Variables	Multinomial Logit Coefficients			Marginal Effects ( $\partial y/\partial x$ )			
	NP vs. Public	Private vs. Public	Academia vs. Public	Public	NP	Private	Academia
Public Service Motivation (5-25)	-0.162* (0.070)	-0.097* (0.051)	-0.042 (0.057)	0.008			
Age (years)	0.204** (0.066)	0.000 (0.031)	0.183*** (0.045)	-0.007	0.008	0.025	0.024
Gender (1=male, 0=female)	-0.666 (0.364)	0.869** (0.291)	0.909* (0.359)	-0.06	-0.081	0.077	0.065
Undergraduate GPA (0.0-5.0)	0.472 (1.076)	-0.401 (0.575)	-0.231 (0.591)				
Undergraduate university (1=public, 0=sector)	0.030 (0.532)	0.459 (0.448)	-0.882 (0.743)		-0.029		
Salary before study abroad (log. Colombian pesos)	-0.628 (0.446)	-0.195 (0.283)	-0.829** (0.269)	0.04			-0.095
Wage Dispersion (1 if salary $\geq$ public sector mean)	0.398 (0.387)	-0.117 (0.381)	-0.653* (0.328)				-0.098
Previous Public Sector Experience (months)	-0.025*** (0.006)	-0.022*** (0.006)	-0.017*** (0.005)	0.002		-0.001	
Preference for Public Sector (1=yes, 0=no)	-1.270 (1.042)	-1.057 (0.694)	-1.138*** (0.199)	0.097			
Graduate Prog. in Public Affairs (1=yes, 0=no)	0.865*** (0.248)	0.134 (0.223)	-0.659 (0.590)		0.061		
Graduate Prog. in Business (1=yes, 0=no)	-0.674 (1.541)	1.386 (0.861)	0.275 (0.425)			0.236	
Type of Contract (1=indefinite, 0=fixed)	-0.395 (0.690)	1.132*** (0.278)	-0.372 (0.463)			0.251	-0.168
Parent Public Official (1=yes, 0=no)	-0.320 (0.493)	-0.522 (0.330)	-0.568* (0.236)				-0.027
Parent political participation (1=yes, 0=no)	2.533 (1.608)	2.836* (1.181)	1.952 (1.478)			0.235	
Ideology (1 Left -> 7 Right)	0.313 (0.296)	0.263 (0.169)	0.036 (0.155)				
N=385 Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> =0.245 Only marginal effects that are statistically significant at the 0.05 level are shown.							

However, there does not appear to be a relationship between PSM and whether an individual chooses a job in academia. The coefficient is negative but not significant. This evidence from Colombia reinforces the positive relationship that previous literature has found

between public sector employment and PSM (Houston, 2000; Perry et al., 2010). The following sub-sections explore the substance of these relationships by analyzing the marginal effects.

#### **4.2.1 Determinants of Public Sector Employment**

An examination of the marginal effects for public sector employment shows that six of the explanatory variables are significantly associated with taking a government job.<sup>5</sup> According to the results, public service motivation, age, gender, salary, previous public sector experience and a previous preference for working in the public sector are related to the probability of taking a public sector job. The marginal effect for PSM is 0.008, which means that a standard deviation increase (3.16) in PSM corresponds to a 2.5% increase in the probability of taking a public sector job, holding the other variables at their means. Although the magnitude of the marginal effect is certainly small, this positive relationship still confirms (in the context of a developing country) previous results by authors such as Lewis and Frank (2002), Steijn (2008) and Vandenabeele (2008).

On the other hand, age is negatively related to public sector employment and so follows Lewis and Frank's (2002) earlier findings. Older individuals are less likely than younger people to work in government organizations – one additional year of age decreases the probability of taking a government job by 0.7%, holding the other independent variables at their means. These results indicate that the government in Colombia might not be very attractive for older and seasoned people and so in this sense strategies can be targeted to these specific groups.

My results also reinforce work by Blank (1985), Van Ophem (1993), and Lewis & Frank (2002), which found that women were more likely than men to seek public sector employment.

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<sup>5</sup> Two differences between the MNL coefficients and marginal effects warrant mention. First, as noted above, the marginal effects differ from the MNL coefficients in that they are not isolated to a comparison with a single reference group. Second, the marginal effects are calculated through bootstrapping, while the MNL coefficients are assumed to adhere to a sampling distribution that follows the t-distribution. These two differences occasionally result in a significant coefficient/non-significant marginal effect or vice-versa.

According to this analysis, men in my sample are 6% less likely than women to choose the public sector. This is consistent with both previous international literature and Colombian scholarship (Maldonado, 2000). According to the positive wage differential between public and private sector for females (Martinez, 2008), Colombian women earn more in the Colombian public sector than in comparable positions in the private sector, thus making public sector jobs more attractive for them.

Salary before study abroad is also significantly related to the probability of joining the public sector after returning to Colombia. A 1% increase in prior salary corresponds to a 4% increase in the probability that an individual decides to join the public sector upon returning to Colombia. This result is consistent with Lewis and Frank (2002) who find that “the more strongly respondents valued high income, the more likely they were to prefer government employment” (2002, p. 398).

The Colombian economics literature has historically shown that salaries are lower in the public sector (compared to the private sector) for those with graduate education (Maldonado, 2000) and for public officials at the top level (Observatorio del Mercado de Trabajo y la Seguridad Social, 2003; Arango et al., 2004). But recent research has found that the salary differential is shrinking (Martinez, 2008). Perhaps these results provide indirect evidence that the differential is in fact decreasing. Alternatively, given that the individuals in this sample are typically qualified for high-level government positions, it may also be that they are willing to sacrifice income for the recognition that they can get from a powerful government position or even that they can afford to (temporarily) take a governmental job with a lower salary in exchange for future benefits (connections, prestige, experience). In any case, the results indicate

that salary remains a significant determinant for these individuals, and the particular causal mechanisms that underlie the relationship warrant additional research.

Loyalty also appears to be at work among public officials in the sample. Previous public sector employment and previously expressed preference for working in the public sector emerge as significant predictors for choosing the public sector as an employer of choice. For example, one additional year of previous public sector experience corresponds to a 2.4% higher likelihood of joining the public sector. Although few studies have included experience in the public sector as an independent variable, Tansel (1999) found a similarly positive relationship with public sector employment. Not surprisingly, those individuals who demonstrate a preference for the public sector are 9.7% more likely to work for the public sector than those who express a preference for working in the nonprofit or for-profit sectors, a finding that is consistent with earlier research (Tschirhart et al., 2008; Vandenabeele et al., 2004).

Another interesting result is that ideology appears not to be statistically significant. So if PSM remains a significant job determinant, even when one controls for ideology, it might mean that PSM is not necessarily linked to one particular political color or thought, at least in the context of a developing country like Colombia. James Perry (1997) did not find either a significant role for the antecedent variable ideology.

Altogether these results demonstrate that younger individuals, women and those with previous public-sector work experience are the most likely candidates for public sector employment upon their return to Colombia. This information provides insights for public sector human capital professionals who are tasked to recruit and retain talented employees. For example, recruiters might focus on designing mechanisms to ease the access of younger graduates, those who have served in the public sector before studying abroad, and women – if

they are looking to tap into populations that are predisposed to taking public sector positions. On the other hand, it might be worth targeting older individuals, those who have little public sector experience, and men if the goal is to improve the government's ability to hire from those who appear to be less predisposed to working for a public organization.

#### **4.2.2 Determinants of Nonprofit Sector Jobs**

Four of the marginal effects are statistically significant predictors for taking a job in the nonprofit sector: Age, gender (marginally significant at  $p < 0.10$ ), pursuing a graduate program in public affairs abroad, and attending a public university. I will discuss each of these in turn.

The relationship between age and working for the nonprofit sector is the opposite of what we find for the public sector. Older individuals appear to be more likely than younger ones to prefer working for a nonprofit. According to the marginal effects, one additional year of age corresponds to a 0.8% higher probability of working for a nonprofit. On the other hand, the relationship for gender is the same for both the government and nonprofit sectors. The marginal effect for the latter shows that men are 8.1% less likely than women to join a nonprofit. These results may reflect a stronger preference for service-oriented jobs among women (also evident in public sector results), which is consistent with Christensen and Wright's findings (2009).

Individuals who pursue graduate education programs in public affairs abroad are 6.1% more likely to join a nonprofit, while graduates from public universities are 2.9% less likely than private university alumni to join such organizations. Both effects might be explained by the fact that in my sample an important number of individuals classified as working in nonprofits work in multilateral development organizations (for example, World Bank, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Inter-American Development Bank, and OECD). These organizations are able to attract internationally qualified professionals since they are usually located in global cities (for

example, New York, Washington, Geneva, Paris) and offer lucrative job conditions and compensation. These organizations typically employ a significant number of graduates with public affairs degrees. On the other hand, considering that Colfuturo fellows are required to return to Colombia or else pay back the loan in full, it makes sense that graduates from private universities, usually from families with higher incomes, are more likely to take jobs in these organizations located abroad.

#### **4.2.3 Determinants of Private Sector Employment**

The analysis of marginal effects, in terms of private sector employment, shows that six variables appear as statistically significant in relation to the probability of taking a job in that sector: Age, male gender, public sector experience, getting a graduate degree in business abroad, having an indefinite contract job offer after study abroad, and having a parent who participates in political activities. I now explain each of these marginal effects.

First, one additional year of age corresponds to a 2.5% higher likelihood of taking a job in the private sector. That is to say, older people are more likely to choose the private sector over other options. This may reflect the fact that when returning to the country, and as they grow older, individuals take on more family and economic responsibilities (for example, children, a spouse, parents, buying a house). As a result, the private sector may be a more attractive sector for them as here one has historically been compensated at higher levels. On the other hand, it might just imply that the retention effect becomes stronger in the public sector as individuals get older.

Males are 7.7% more likely to join the private sector than females. As noted above, there is a positive wage differential between the public and the private sectors for women which makes private sector jobs less attractive for them (Disney & Gosling, 1998). Various studies have

consistently identified lower salaries and a glass ceiling effect for women in Colombia that is particularly evident in the private sector (Fernandez, 2006; Tenjo & Herrera, 2009). This explanation makes sense in the sense that women are comparatively better paid in the public sector.

Third, former public officials are less likely to choose the public sector as an employer after graduate education abroad. According to marginal effects one additional year of experience in public organizations reduces the likelihood of joining the private sector by 1.2%. This might reflect the fact that former public employees either have a preference for public sector jobs or are less willing to switch sectors after pursuing a graduate degree outside the country. This result is consistent with the retention effect in the public sector that appears evident across the results and overall the preference for public sector jobs appears strong for Colombian public officials.

Conversely, those individuals who pursue graduate programs in business are 23.6% more likely to join the private sector than those who attended other types of graduate programs. This might be an expected result given the characteristics of MBA degrees and other related programs, which are oriented towards private business. This is a strong relationship that is consistent with similar evidence found within the U.S. context for MBAs by Tschirhart et al. (2008). Individuals with MBAs who receive Colfuturo scholarships have a lower percentage of the debt waived, a situation that probably forces them to look for more stable or better paid jobs in the for-profit sector.

Fourth, reflecting the importance of job stability in sector choice, those professionals who receive job offers with indefinite contracts are 25.1% more likely to join the private sector than those who are offered fixed term contracts. According to the results the private sector is more



likely to provide stable jobs through indefinite contracts.<sup>6</sup> However, one important caveat is the fact that this relationship can be endogenous. In other terms, the sector choice defines the type of contract you receive. However, the model improves its explanatory power by adding a variable that has become a critical component of job offers in the Colombian context, according to the evidence that I collected from qualitative interviews in chapter five.

Those individuals whose father or mother had some level of political participation are 23.5% more likely to join the private sector after graduate education abroad. Although these results might be counterintuitive, especially considering the strong tradition of political dynasties in a country like Colombia (Querubin, 2010, p. 9), perhaps the harsh security situation and legal problems that politicians usually face in the country might end up expelling their children from political and public sector activities to safer and less exposed roles in the private sector.

Together these results suggest that individuals who are attracted to private sector jobs are different from those attracted to public sector jobs. For example, the usual candidates for positions in the private sector across this sample are males, individuals with lower levels of public service motivation, workers with less experience in the public sector, people who were offered indefinite contracts, and those who pursued graduate programs in business.

#### **4.2.4 Determinants of Choosing an Academic Job**

Six of the marginal effects are statistically significant for the academic sector: Age, gender, salary prior to study abroad, wage dispersion, contract type, and parental involvement in politics. I will discuss each in turn below.

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<sup>6</sup> As noted in chapter three, fixed-term contracts have a fixed and limited duration. Indefinite term contracts have no time limit and are said to provide greater confidence in the employee (and thus a sense of stability) by offering more potential for a long-term relationship with the employer.

According to marginal effects, older people are less likely to join the academic world. One additional year of age decreases the probability of taking an academic job by 2.4%. This might be explained by the academic degree requirements that are unique to professorial positions at universities and which have become stricter in recent years in Colombian universities. Since they require people to hold Ph.D. degrees in order to take positions there, people without Ph.D. degrees are less suitable for full time jobs in higher education institutions as they become older.

Conversely, and similarly in the private sector, males are 6.5% more likely to join academia than females. The high levels of productivity that are required for individuals in academia after they finish Ph.D. programs can explain why women are less likely to pursue academic positions. In the female life cycle the years for pursuing tenure or academic recognition (since in Colombia tenure track systems are not common across most universities) coincide with the years they may become pregnant and care for their children. This is consistent with previous literature, which has showed that women in academic jobs are subject to great pressures as a result of socio-demographic changes (divorce, childbearing, family demands) (Probert, 2005). They also receive lower rewards and are less likely to get tenure in academic positions due to interruptions from family responsibilities (McElrath, 1992).

People with previous higher salaries are less likely to choose academic jobs over jobs in other sectors. According to the evidence, an increase of 1% in salary corresponds with a reduction of 9.5% in the probability of joining academia. Academic positions usually show low levels of pay in the Colombian context in comparison to jobs in other sectors. Although recent authors have not tackled this issue, a document by CIDE (1999) illustrates the low levels of salaries in most public universities in Colombia. Since the individuals in this sample show high levels of qualification, either they accept offers from the top universities that offer better pay to

them or go into jobs into other sectors. The fact that the Ph.D. has a low marginal benefit in terms of salary can also explain why those who go into academic jobs receive a lower level of pay.

Likewise, those with indefinite contracts are 16.8% less likely to join academia than those with fixed term contracts. This can be explained by the difficulties that some individuals who pursue studies in less “commercial” areas (for example, the humanities and fine arts) have to find stable jobs, which force them to accept short term jobs as adjuncts or members of temporary research projects in higher education institutions. Interestingly, academia is the only sector where the wage dispersion variable shows a statistically significant marginal effect. Those individuals whose salary is greater than the public sector average are 9.8% less likely to take an academic position, and those individuals whose father or mother was a public official are 2.8% less likely to take an academic job.

### **4.3 Discussion**

Job sector choices reflect values and personal preferences generated by individuals throughout their lifetimes (for example, civic duty, compassion, public service motivation, entrepreneurialism, economic rationality, ambition). However, these choices also reflect the influence of other attributes (for example, compensation packages, fit with the organization, retirement plans, personal and professional development) more specific to the individual jobs and organizations with which an individual interacts. However, the combination of these elements and the differences/similarities across individuals can also help to analyze the attractiveness of the public sector vis-à-vis other sectors. That is the ultimate end that I pursue in this chapter.

These results show some trends among those who choose to work in different sectors. As for the public sector, individuals with high levels of PSM, younger employees, women, former public officials and people who expressed a preference for public sector jobs prior to study abroad are the most likely candidates for working for the government after studying abroad. This pattern is clearly different from those determinants that I found to be significant for the private sector, nonprofits and academia. Public sector employees in Colombia appear to have a particular set of determinants for job sector choices.

My results indicate that public service motivation does play a role in job sector choice in Colombia. Within the context of a developing country the positive relationship to public sector employment supports the initial premise established by Perry and Wise (1990) about public sector employment. The fact that PSM is significant in the context of a country like Colombia is consistent with Houston's (2011) argument that PSM has a stronger influence on sector choice in less developed welfare states.

My results show that salary also plays a role in public sector employment. Individuals with higher salaries prior to study abroad have a higher probability of taking a government job rather than a job in any other sector. There are several reasons for why this may be the case. First, it might reflect a decreasing wage differential between the public and private sectors (see for example Martinez, 2008). Second, it is possible that individuals with previously higher salaries are willing to reduce their income for a while in exchange for the recognition and expertise that they get from a public sector job. Third, the additional 10% of the loan that Colfuturo waives for those who go into the public sector might be attractive for some people. Fourth, they may simply be willing to sacrifice an amount of income in exchange for future

benefits. It is tough to sort out these competing explanations without data on individuals' compensation after studying abroad.

The results also indicate that the public sector in Colombia has loyal employees who tend to return to public sector jobs when they reenter the market. Previous public sector employment increases the probability of choosing the government as the employer of choice after study abroad and is a negative determinant for taking a job in the private sector. I aim to study the mechanisms through which this retention takes place in the qualitative analysis in chapter five.

However, other results form a different pattern for those who choose jobs in nonprofit organizations. Women, older people, graduates from public affairs programs, and graduates from public universities are significantly more likely than others to take jobs in nonprofit organizations. The greater probability for those who pursue programs in public affairs might provide evidence for the idea that people with these degrees find jobs more easily in philanthropic organizations or that such organizations (for example, multilaterals) are more attractive employers than public organizations, supposedly the most likely employer of MPAs and MPPs.

On the other hand, graduates from public universities are more likely to take a nonprofit job. This result might indicate that nonprofit organizations attract graduates from publicly funded universities, opening the normative question as to whether the Colombian state should be more proactive in attracting graduates from its own university system (who have received education through publicly funded institutions) to public sector jobs.

In terms of the determinants of private sector choice, those who received job offers with indefinite term contracts were much more likely (25.1%) to choose a private organization job

over a public one. This might indicate that public organizations, especially at the top level, have been unable to offer, to a similar degree, indefinite contracts to this group of individuals. In light of greater economic and family responsibilities when returning to Colombia, these individuals, who are in debt with Colfuturo, have an incentive to prefer jobs with indefinite contracts, which seem to be more frequent in private organizations. Individuals may prefer indefinite term contracts according to the greater job security that they provide and the associated benefits (for example, access to credit, stable pay, lower uncertainty).

More experience in the public sector reduces the probability of choosing a job with for-profit organizations (over public sector jobs). This demonstrates that most former public sector workers tend to choose to return to government positions after pursuing graduate education abroad. The Colombian public sector might take into consideration this result in order to design a program for public officials to be rapidly re-recruited by governmental organizations after graduate education before other sectors employ them. Since elements such as the availability of jobs or the quality of job offers can play a significant role in ensuring retention, I explore some of these elements in the interviews that I will discuss in detail in chapter five.

One contribution of this work is the analysis of the interaction between PSM and the decision to take a job in academia. According to the results, PSM does not play any particular role in this decision. In fact, elements from the public sector seem to work to the detriment of the probability of choosing an academic job. Longer experience in public organizations, previous preference for the public sector, higher salaries and having a parent who was a public official can make people less likely to choose academia over the public sector.

#### **4.4 Conclusions**

Elements such as PSM, previous public sector experience, and preference for the public sector seem to operate as strong determinants of public sector employment in this developing country. Moreover, public sector work experience is a positive determinant of public sector membership and a negative determinant for private sector jobs. It seems that individuals with high PSM prefer to materialize their motivation through public organizations, even rather than in other service-oriented organizations like nonprofits. Former public officials also seem to prefer government jobs to any other sector once they return from time abroad.

Despite this and according to the descriptive statistics, the government is losing a certain percentage of people when they return from study abroad. The proportion of individuals who worked in the public sector before graduate education abroad was 17.8%. After graduate education abroad only 5.8% remained in the public sector, indicating a reduction of 12 percentage points. In absolute terms, 28 individuals in my sample switched from the public sector to the private sector after graduate education abroad (37% of the initial public sector employees), while 16 individuals switched from the private sector to the public sector (8.3% of the initial for-profit employees), reflecting a negative net effect for the public sector.

Wright (2001) argues that PSM can probably explain the decision to take a job in a particular sector, but that the effect afterwards is less clear. If PSM can only explain initial attraction, but not retention or more satisfaction, the Colombian government might consider a more proactive strategy in order to retain former public officials who have an institutional memory and the empirical knowledge of public sector jobs. When Colfuturo graduates rejoin the labor market they are typically attractive candidates for all sectors given that they are highly skilled, bilingual and have attended first-class educational institutions elsewhere in the world. Other sectors compete aggressively for these individuals and the private sector seems to lead to

the creation of new strategies to attract the most talented (Durant et al., 2009). Even the descriptive statistics evidence that a significant percentage of public employees switch to other sectors after graduate education abroad. To understand the causal mechanisms behind these patterns I explore job sector choice using qualitative data in chapter five.

The results here suggest that government agencies might develop actions to attract other talented individuals who do not consider the public sector an attractive choice. On the other hand, since public sector preference and PSM are also significant determinants then other specific actions can increase the return of former public officials after graduate education abroad. It seems that higher salaries work as attractors, but other elements such as contracts appear to send people to other sectors or even discourage other sectors' workers from taking public sector jobs. Therefore, these are aspects that could be instrumental in the design of a more proactive policy for human capital management in the Colombian public sector.

Although labor markets have become more dynamic and today workers increasingly shift across sectors, according to my results individuals in each sector still exhibit different attitudes and motives for choosing a job. Nevertheless and in spite of some shortcomings regarding the kind of contracts that it provides, the government appears to be an employer that retains and attracts particular groups of the population.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **JOB SECTOR CHOICE, ANTECEDENTS, JOB ATTRIBUTES AND WORK MOTIVATION: QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE**

In this chapter I explore the determinants of job sector choices among a group of highly qualified people. Here I focus on the role of job attributes, preferences and work motivation. In order to do so I interviewed eighteen internationally educated Colombians and asked them to tell their stories about the elements that affected their job sector choices after pursuing graduate education abroad. This information will provide evidence as to how those elements affect job sector choice, how their influence changes over time and what can make a particular sector a less or more of an attractive employer, with special interest in the public sector.

#### **5.1 Research Questions**

As I mentioned in the problem definition section of chapter one, some scholars from developed countries have argued that there is erosion in the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer of choice. However, there is little empirical evidence as to whether this is the case, particularly in the developing world and in a country like Colombia. Even less is known in developing countries regarding the role of factors such as work motivation and person-job fit on the choice of the public sector as employer.

This chapter represents an attempt to explore the causal mechanisms that underlie the processes of job decisions within a group of highly qualified people, but also an effort to assess the attractiveness of the Colombian public sector as an employer of choice. Whereas in chapter four I provided quantitative evidence regarding the determinants of sector choice, in this chapter I explore less formally the determinants of those decisions, aiming to open the black-box that explains why a person chooses one specific sector and how preferences change over time. My research questions are:

- 3) What are the roles of personal antecedents, job attributes and work motivation in job choices?
- 4) What roles do these factors play in the decision to join (or not to join) the Colombian public sector?

In the following section there is a review of the methodology and the data used in this chapter. In the findings section I then identify some categories (determinants) that will guide my analysis, namely, 1) individual and family antecedents, 2) previous work experience and decisions, 3) economic aspects, 4) networks and connections for finding jobs, 5) sector preferences, 6) availability of jobs when re-entering the job market after graduate education abroad, 7) preferred job attributes, 8) work motivation. In the final sections I provide some general insights from the responses of this group of individuals and some ideas for practice that I will explore further as policy recommendations in chapter six.

## **5.2 Data Collection**

The purpose of this qualitative effort is to explore the determinants of job choice based on evidence from eighteen interviews of highly skilled professionals who re-entered the job market after pursuing graduate education abroad. In order to do so I follow a grounded theory approach or “the discovery of theory from data” through “a general method of comparative analysis” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). Here I use this idea of grounded theory in the generic sense depicted by Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 1): “[T]o denote theoretical constructs from qualitative analysis of data.” However, I modify the grounded theory approach to reflect some guiding assumptions that are derived from the literature. For example, I take some elements from the literature to define my categories of analysis, but I also then deduct some constructs and

theoretical categories from the data itself. This hybrid methodology might help to identify some previously undiscovered behaviors that cannot be measured or quantified and which can be critical in explaining how it is that someone decides (or not) to work, for instance, for the government.

I interviewed eighteen Colombian individuals who pursued international graduate education and who re-entered the job market afterwards. For analysis purposes I classified them in four groups according to sector switching at job market re-entry (see Table 8):

**Group 1. *The Loyals*:** Those who stayed in the public sector after study abroad.

**Group 2. *The Quitters*:** Those who shifted from the public sector to other sectors.

**Group 3. *The Newcomers*:** Those who shifted from other sectors to the public sector.

**Group 4. *The Others*:** Those who previously worked in sectors other than the public sector and who remain out of the public sector after graduate education abroad.

The distribution in these groups will help me to focus on the elements that explain both public sector employment and attractiveness in comparison to other sectors.

**Table 8. Sample Distribution (N=18)**

Sector Switch	Public Sector After Study Abroad	Other Sectors After Study Abroad
Public Sector Before Study Abroad	N=5 ( <i>The Loyals</i> )	N=4 ( <i>The Quitters</i> )
Other Sectors Before Study Abroad	N=4 ( <i>The Newcomers</i> )	N=5 ( <i>The Others</i> )

In order to build the sample I used purposive sampling to identify individuals across four sectors (public, nonprofit, private, academia) who had already re-entered the job market after graduate education abroad. In some cases I used snowballing in order to find some additional suitable cases. Thus the main criterion for selection in this sample was to select individuals who stayed or switched from the public sector after study abroad, or who did not select the

government as their employer of choice before and after international graduate education. This allows me to focus on an inflection point in life in which individuals (across different sectors) re-enter the job market (after one or two years of studies in other countries) and change or confirm previous job choices.

By taking a qualitative approach I also get a more dynamic view of sector choices that the quantitative dataset does not provide. Although the interviews focused on the first job decision after graduate education abroad, thanks to the semi-structured character of the questionnaire all of the interviews also covered other elements regarding previous (and later) job decisions. This allowed me to capture elements that help to analyze, for instance, how those earlier decisions affect later ones and how the criteria for choosing one sector of employment changes as the individuals get older.

**Table 9. Sample Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>In Qualitative Sample (N=18)</b>	<b>In Quantitative Sample Frame (N=967)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	33%	40.1%
Male	66%	59.9%
<b>Country of Study</b>		
USA	50%	44.0%
Europe	50%	27.4%
<b>Discipline of Graduate Studies</b>		
Other Social Sciences	28%	11.4%
Economics	22%	3.7%
Political Science and IR	17%	5.5%
Law	11%	13.2%
Engineering	11%	17.2%
Business	11%	19.7%

I conducted the interviews over a period of three weeks in March 2011 in Bogota D.C. and Cali, Colombia, through a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix 2 and chapter three). I

digitally recorded all the interviews after all the subjects had signed consent forms and a protocol had been explained to them. Later, a research assistant transcribed the digital records into Word text-processor, which were then read at least twice by the researcher. Finally, I translated some sections of the interviews from Spanish to English in order for them to be included as sections of this chapter.

While the small size of the sample (N=18) makes it difficult to ensure representativeness of all employees, it permits me to delve into the micro-level factors at a level of detail that would otherwise be impossible with a larger sample of interviewees (Table 9). Having employees from all four categories of employment (Table 8) ensures that the perspectives of each category of employee will be represented in the data, which is ultimately the most important dimension of representation for the purposes of this chapter. There is a slight overrepresentation of men, graduates of European institutions and graduates of economics, political science and other social sciences. Colfuturo funded 33% of the interviewees between 2002 and 2007, individuals who are subsequently part of my quantitative sample. Although the individuals are somewhat homogeneous in some socio-demographic characteristics (income, age, level of education) there is sufficient variance in terms of area of education, type of degree and sector of work.

### **5.3 Findings**

After transcription I read the text of the interviews twice in order to code and establish categories. First, I aimed to find evidence for categories already identified in previous literature (economic aspects, previous decisions, family antecedents). Then, following a hybrid grounded theory approach, I attempted to identify and code new categories from the data itself; this proved especially rich regarding job attributes and work motivation from the words of the interviewees. According to this the analysis I developed the following categories and findings.

### 5.3.1 Individual and Family Antecedents

Most individuals in the sample place in doubt any direct effect of childhood or teenage experiences (volunteerism, scouts, religious groups, and so on) on their sector choices (N=10), although certainly some of them recognize some influence in their service orientation or altruistic behaviors. However, there are some distinctions across groups of analysis. Regarding *The Loyals*, of those who remained in the public sector after study abroad two individuals asserted that their social service experiences in college were relevant to later job choices. Individuals in the second group, *The Quitters*, mentioned that those experiences affected orientation to a certain degree, but not sector choice. In these two groups there were five responses regarding different experiences (volunteerism, participation in political groups) as influential in developing an interest for service-oriented jobs.

As for the individuals in the third group, *The Newcomers*, there was no single pattern for how individual antecedents affected their job sector decision and no one claimed a direct influence on sector choice. Regarding the fourth group, *The Others*, or those who have never worked in the public sector, one individual argued that his father's experiences seemed to determine his orientation towards the private sector, while another argued that the experience of his father as a public official diminished his willingness to join the public sector. This can be seen in his statement:

My grandfather and father were top public officials, so I thought I could serve the city and do good things; that is what I thought initially [...] But then I started to see that it was very difficult, and then I understood that there is a high risk in acting [in the public sector], hence there is no point looking for a job that brings legal trouble.

To summarize, a significant number of the interviewees mentioned some antecedents, namely parents' volunteer activities, college experiences and attending public universities, as drivers of an orientation towards service jobs or the desire to emulate those activities. Seemingly,

childhood and teenage experiences appeared to influence orientation towards service jobs, but did not seem to directly affect job sector choices, at least according to most cases. For instance, the following assertion by an individual who has always been a private sector employee shows how previous experiences and family can influence choices to a certain extent, and also how other factors seem to be more influential on job decisions as careers evolve:

I don't think my parents had something to do with my job sector choices, although, for instance, my dad was always an active member of nonprofit organizations. Perhaps now I see the influence. I was a volunteer since I was in school; I worked with an organization, precisely one where my dad was a member, which worked on prevention of drug addiction. Later in college I also helped a project in Ciudad Bolívar for the education of poor children [...] So these things have always existed in me, and I think they are to a certain extent a legacy of him, however today have I left those activities.

Overall, the effect of parents' choices on the individual's sector choice appears to not be strong. Rather than defining the sector of employment, parents provide a role model for careers and pro-social behaviors in a way coherent with Perry (1997). In a similar vein, in the statistical analysis in chapter four I found no significant effect on public sector employment, while controlling for other factors, from parents who were public officials or who participated in political activities. In fact, according to marginal effects the political participation of parents increases the probability of their children taking a job in the private sector.

### **5.3.2 Previous Work Experiences and Decisions**

According to interviews, initial work choices have an impact on later decisions by defining the sector of employment. This effect is especially clear when we analyze responses by the four groups under analysis. With regard to *The Loyals*, all the individuals in this group stated that they stayed in the public sector because they started careers in that sector and had stronger connections and acquaintances in government, rather than in other sectors. This reflects a retention effect among public officials, which takes place even in the absence of an

institutionalized retention strategy from the Colombian government. However, it also reflects the role that connections play in getting a job in the Colombian public sector, an element that I explore further later on.

Conversely, some former public officials switched to other sectors in spite of their previous governmental experiences. Those who left the public sector, *The Quitters*, asserted that they left the public sector due the low stability of jobs, unavailability of jobs and feeling of low social impact with regard to the work of their agencies. Even more interestingly, three of them claimed that although they initially tried unsuccessfully to join the public sector, they later took jobs in other sectors that deal with issues related to public affairs. The following assertion by one interviewee from *The Quitters* reflects why some people leave the public sector:

It was not easy finding a suitable job in the public sector, because the system does not reward the fact that you have qualified yourself further. In Colombia, in the public sector, the worker who has been longer in office is the most highly regarded. In other words, the labor market punishes you for leaving the country to get an education. To me that really hurt when I came back, because the best offer I had was going back to my former public agency to do the same thing that I was doing before.

In terms of *The Newcomers*, two individuals regarded previous decisions as not crucial in their decision to join the public sector, since they were actually working in other sectors before, and the remaining two did not mention any particular effect of prior choices on their decision to take a governmental job. Among *The Others*, three of the individuals asserted that they have always worked in the private sector since most of their experience is in such organizations. They also said that they did not have a particular preference for jobs in other organizations or sectors. These assertions provide evidence of an inherent stability in private sector jobs and the associated retention that it generates. Two interviewees in this group mentioned having received job offers from the public sector at points in their careers after studying abroad, but they declined



them for reasons such as family commitments, fears of legal problems due to work in public office, and simply preferring the job they do.

The assertion by a private sector top executive about how he was recruited by a private firm even before finishing college, epitomizes how initial decisions can define upcoming careers and how the private sector can be more aggressive in attracting promising candidates:

It's funny, but I sensed that in my class I was one of the most oriented towards the public sector. But then private companies started to come to campus to recruit and I really felt like trying it there. I also was not sure where and how to enter the public sector [...] And you hear the whole question of patronage, and I was not so sure, I used to think probably there is space to do things in the public sector but for me it was not clear [...] the options in the private sector were more transparent, so I decided to go to the private sector.

Years later, after finishing an MBA at a top international university, this person still wanted to work in public affairs, but instead he chose a position in a top private consultancy firm that conducted government projects in developing countries. This case shows how initial decisions matter and affect later choices, even for people motivated to work in public service. Furthermore, it makes evident how early recruitment in the public sector is critical, as I concluded in chapter four, in order to detect and attract talented young graduates willing to work for the public sector early on.

In conclusion, the evidence from the interviews for this item shows that initial decisions do matter, so it makes sense for an employer to recruit early. For most individuals in the sample it was natural to follow prior work experience. While the public sector seems to exhibit a certain retention power among those who stayed, other individuals seemed unable to continue their previous careers and left their government careers. On the other hand and according to these responses, other sectors can also be attractive for former and new employees, thanks to the

stability that private sector jobs provide and the inherent social impact of the job, particularly in the case of nonprofits.

### 5.3.3 Salary and Economic Aspects

In this section I asked individuals about the role of economic related elements such as salary, debt and family responsibilities. In general terms, it appears that the influence of salary on the decision is contingent on the presence of other responsibilities or commitments. Within the group of those in the public sector, *The Loyals'* and *The Newcomers'* responses supported the idea that salary is important when other economic responsibilities (debt, family) are present. Regarding *The Others*, four of the five members of this group concurred that a “good” salary was necessary for them to pay their educational debts and thus they deliberately pursued jobs in the private sector where salaries are higher. As for *The Quitters*, those individuals who had educational debt also regarded salary as important.

On the other hand, the testimony by one person in this group reflects the role of salary for those who left public sector jobs:

Initially that job was not what I was looking for but it was well paid. I had been unemployed for several months, when I returned only a few contacts recognized me, finally someone from a public agency made an offer, it was a fixed-term contract through an international cooperation agency, there was no selection process and it was good money. It worked well for two semesters but then I was offered a more stable job at a university with a lower salary, then my criteria for taking that job was to increase stability and sacrifice pay.

This case suggests that the public sector in Colombia may need to find better ways to offer stable jobs to highly qualified individuals. It is even more striking that, according to this professional, after some years in this academic position he does not see himself as going back to what he defines as an “unsecure” job in the public sector. Therefore, it seems that salary and

security play a role for individuals who have left the public sector, perhaps reflecting the inability of this sector to offer competitive and attractive jobs.

Three of the interviewees in different groups argued that specific economic situations affected their job decisions when they re-entered the market. For instance, in the case of one of *The Newcomers* the economic support of his family in paying graduate education defined his commitment to return to work in the family's company instead of the public sector, where the work was actually more desirable to him. This individual eventually joined the public sector after some time. Yet, the following statement shows the interaction of economic elements and family responsibilities and how the role of salary evolves with time and increasing responsibilities:

Wage is important for me now, that is to say the economic conditions of a job; even though before it was not so. This is something that has changed in me, because before having my children my perspective was, if the salary is not OK but I like the job I can handle that, I'll take the job. However, I cannot do that anymore. Now for me the ends of the organization are as important as the economic stability that the job is able to provide for me and my family.

There are no apparent differences across groups in terms of other family responsibilities or commitments. However, some interesting issues arose at the individual level. For five interviewees it was essential to match their job choices with the ones of their spouses, especially in terms of location, time and/or income level. On the other hand, three of the interviewees argued their choices were limited by scholarship commitments that forced them to go back to work with the same employers that funded their studies abroad. Partner's decisions matter and incentives to return after graduate education abroad appear to work.

In conclusion, the role of salary appears to be contingent on the particular conditions of the individual. In fact, it is a highly relevant variable, especially evident for those who were indebted to or had greater family responsibilities after finishing their graduate programs. Still,

the qualitative evidence tends to contradict the statistical analysis regarding the positive relationship between salary and public sector choice in chapter four. According to the responses, the Colombian public sector has not been able to provide stable and well-paid jobs. Whereas other sectors, particularly the private sector, appear more aggressive in publicizing their benefits, and thus more able to match the demands of these highly qualified individuals who see it as a high payer and subsequently as a more attractive employer.

#### **5.3.4 Networks and connections**

According to the interviews, connections emerge as significant determinants of job decisions after graduate education abroad. This idea of connections involves both formal (professional) and informal networks (cliques). Indeed, individuals in public sector jobs consistently regarded connections as very important, although some workers from other sectors mentioned them too. Half of the individuals in the complete sample (N=9) asserted that friends and acquaintances were instrumental in finding their jobs when they returned to the country after graduate education abroad. Two of the remaining individuals stated that connections did not affect their job choices, but essentially this was because they had lost most of them while studying abroad.

According to the interviewees, individuals resorted to connections in order to gather job market information, to disseminate their CVs or simply to fill a position thanks to an acquaintance. Some subjects argued that they resorted to acquaintances from previous jobs in order to get jobs in those organizations, whereas others asserted that connections were instrumental only in getting useful information about unfilled positions. Still, connections seem to promote clearer and faster access to government jobs. One public official stated that he

contacted his previous boss in the public sector and got a job afterwards and much faster than other colleagues who looked for similar jobs in the public sector.

The relevance of connections is also evident in the groups of analysis. All *The Loyals* said that connections were instrumental in finding their own jobs in the public sector. Regarding *The Quitters*, three interviewees also stated that networks and connections were significant in finding their jobs. Similarly, three of *The Newcomers* argued that they were only able to join the public sector when acquaintances joined the high government and called them to take positions in different public organizations. The assertion by one individual in this group reflects how influential connections are, even though appointments are still based on the skills, merits and capacities of the candidate:

After working abroad I had the obligation to return to Colombia, although I had a tenure track offer I wanted to contribute to my country and go back to work in a specific public agency [...] I had the idea that I had all the credentials, that I was one of the only experts in those topics, so I contacted one of the top officials in that agency, I do not remember who he was, he told me they were impressed with my CV but that the position was already taken. Then my former employers contacted me, I told them I was considering other jobs, but after much wondering I accepted [...] shortly after I started working there I was called by a former classmate, who was just appointed head of that public agency, to fill the position of my dreams.

Overall, it seems that connections play a pivotal role in Colombia for highly skilled people in finding jobs. This is particularly evident in the case of individuals in the public sector (*The Loyals* and *The Newcomers*) where many identified them as a key determinant. This is not surprising because connections have been identified in previous research as important in government employment (Lewis & Frank, 2002; Granovetter, 1995). This also supports one of the conclusions from chapter four, the need to institutionalize formal programs in the Colombian government in order to attract and recruit highly skilled individuals to the public sector, and reduce the role of cliques and closed professional networks. Although such a change may come

with a cost – it might imply losing the efficiency with which information networks convey information about vacant jobs – an institutionalized system can ensure a more democratic and participative process.

### 5.3.5 Sector Preference

I define sector preference as the idea that some individuals express a desire to work in a particular sector (public, private, nonprofit). While some of the respondents indicated that they were currently working in their sector of choice, others identify a different sector as their preference. This section will therefore discuss the interviewees in two specific groups: (1) Those persons who had a sector preference and made job choices according to it (N=8), and (2) those interviewees who adapted their sector preferences to the jobs available in the market or who changed their preferences according to job experiences (N=10).

If one explores differences by groups of analysis, four of *The Loyals* regarded past job decisions as instrumental in developing a preference for public sector jobs. Two individuals in this group argued that they initially worked in the public sector without stating a preference for it, but later developed a motivation to public service through their works. This suggests that socialization to public sector values may take place in governmental organizations in Colombia.

On the other hand, it seems that others have more flexible preferences and that this is reflected in their choices. Three of *The Quitters* declared a preference for the public sector combined with a preference for other sectors. One former public official expressed this mixed preference:

In the beginning I was oriented towards the public sector in social issues. I did not consider working in nonprofits because I did not know the sector very well. In fact, my experience in the public sector with nonprofits was not good, and the kind of nonprofits we had to deal with were not the ones you precisely want to work with. They were very small NGOs, entirely dependent on the government, pure contractors with a low impact on development.

However, I later knew other bigger nonprofit organizations that now look very attractive to join.

Three of *The Newcomers* stated no previous preference for the public sector (one of them argued having no sector preference). Moreover, two of them reported that they were attracted to the idea of shaping public policies as well as being attracted by benefits such as the scholarship incentives given to people who work in the public sector. Socialization also appears to have taken place within this group, as two mentioned not wanting to leave the public sector after working there for a while. With respect to individuals in the group *The Others*, only one stated a preference for the public sector, although she was clear in asserting that she felt she was accomplishing a similar service mission at a nonprofit. Other interviewees in this fourth group indicated that their preferences corresponded with their current jobs.

In conclusion, preference for one sector does not necessarily entail working for that sector, as Steen (2008) has shown. In fact, for some of the individuals the decision to join one sector happened more by chance than by preference, a concept that Lewis and Frank (2002) also included in their model. Alternatively, the responses demonstrate that socialization processes may occur across all sectors. Thus, according to the responses socialization and retention processes benefit the public sector in Colombia, even without concrete actions to ensure those outcomes. Still, public agencies in Colombia might be losing talented and motivated people who want to work in the public sector, but are unable to find ways to join it.

### **5.3.6 Availability of Jobs**

In this work I understand availability of jobs as the match between the job preferences of the individual and the positions available in the job market. This requires that not only are there jobs available, but also that the jobs that are available are the ones that the job seekers are looking for. According to the responses regarding the government sector it seems that the lack

information regarding jobs and connections, combined with poor offers from public employers, operate together to make finding a suitable public sector job difficult for some of the respondents. This statement shows how, together, these elements made sector switching easier:

Initially, I was interested in going back to the public sector [...] I tried to contact some friends in public agencies and former co-workers, but opportunities show up and you have to make decisions. My wife had debt, I did not but we had no savings, we had to start from scratch, so I needed to find a job as soon as possible. You leave one year and I noticed that you lose contact very easily with your network and acquaintances, it seems like the job market punishes you for leaving the country. I could not go back to the same job I was working before leaving the country, but then my contacts worked and I found a job really fast in academia through an old co-worker.

Overall, it seems that there are not many jobs available for potential employees with the level of qualifications typically held by Colfuturo graduates. The system, at least in the public sector, seems to provide the best jobs for those with less education and lower skill development. Responses suggest that the Colombian public sector puts a premium on seniority rather than encouraging further specialization and professional development. The assertions by one top manager at an NGO (a former public official) and by one faculty member at a top university illustrate the situation.

In the view of the NGO manager:

The labor market in Colombia and especially the public sector does not encourage people going abroad to study. They don't reward that. People who stay are the ones who get better jobs, not the ones who travel to other countries to study in order to become more skilled. The Colombian labor market does not forgive leaving the country and the public sector rewards seniority.

And in the view of the faculty member:

I was interested in a technical job in a specific division of the same agency I was working before study abroad. When I returned to the country there was an opportunity at the same agency. However, although I was strong candidate, I was defeated by other candidates who stayed at the agency and were now better known than I was. I had been five years abroad



and was almost unknown in the same place I worked before I left to do my Ph.D. [...] I lost opportunities because seniority was more valued than my technical education. Since my profile was only suitable for top positions too, I did not find the kind of job that I was looking for at that moment.

The interviewees also remarked about the inability of public agencies to offer jobs that match their preferences in terms of salary, promotion opportunities, and flexibility. The mismatch between job offers and people's expectations made them decide to take jobs in other sectors where organizations made more competitive offers. Two individuals in the group *The Loyals*, who were initially only able to work in the public sector through fixed-term contracts, also remarked about the poor conditions of public sector jobs. Indeed, three of *The Quitters* identified these temporary contracts as drivers behind their decisions to leave the public sector. Thus low pay and unstable contracts operate to discourage people from joining or staying in the public sector. It is evident from the interviews that those who left the public sector made that decision because they were attracted, among other reasons, by the greater stability and benefits of other sectors.

According to the interviews, there are three elements that influence the availability of jobs in the Colombian public sector: a) The overriding role of connections, b) the predominance of seniority as criteria for promotion, and c) the prevalence of poor job benefits and fixed-term contracts in the public sector. These factors depict the inability of the Colombian government to attract and retain those individuals who desire to become public employees. According to what the individuals expressed in the interviews this is a group of professionals who demand premium conditions in jobs and have high expectations regarding stability and opportunities for professional development, and the public sector seems to be far from such expectations.

### 5.3.7 Job Attributes (Individual Preferences)

I asked the individuals in my sample to summarize the main job attributes they take into consideration when making job decisions, which I summarize in Table 10. Among these attributes I took into account characteristics of the job, mentioned by the interviewees, and related job benefits, compensation packages, time flexibility, promotion systems, autonomy, team work and infrastructure, among others. I identified these attributes from the responses of the individual, I coded them and then added them into similar categories in order to group them for analysis.

**Table 10. Interviewees' Responses Regarding Preferred Job Attributes**

<b>Job Attribute</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Strong Reference in Group</b>
Social impact of the job	7	<i>The Loyals</i>
Salary	6	<i>The Quitters</i>
Substantive area	6	<i>The Loyals</i>
Time flexibility for personal and family issues	5	<i>The Loyals</i>
Challenges	4	<i>The Quitters</i>
Team (highly skilled, committed)	4	<i>The Loyals</i>
Independence to work	3	<i>The Quitters</i>
An enjoyable job	2	
Leadership	2	
Possibilities for professional development and promotion	2	
Sector	2	
Feedback and recognition from superiors	1	
Learning opportunities	1	
Non-economic incentives	1	
Trust that the organization generates	1	
Who is the boss?	1	

In general terms, the most mentioned attributes are those related to the characteristics of the job itself (rather than the sector), something similar to that which Ritz (2011) mentions about motivational factors regarding the work itself. Firstly, impact appears to be the most significant criterion by which people choose a job. Moreover, impact very often appears among those individuals who work in the public sector after study abroad, but also for those who left it seems that for public officials (current and former) impact remains a primary concern. However, it is

also true for two in nonprofit and even for two in the private sector. Consequently, one's assessment of the social impact of his or her job seems to be highly contingent on the characteristics of each position.

According to responses in Table 10, and considering the elements reviewed in the person-environment fit literature, person-job fit appears highly relevant in these individuals' job choices, especially for attributes that are highly related to the idea of value congruence.<sup>7</sup> Interviewees mentioned as salient features those that are more directly related to the job itself and which can subsequently facilitate the individual's congruence with the goals of the organization: The impact, the topic (substantive area or activity), the independence to work, the challenges of the job, the leadership opportunities, team work and a job that they like.

Furthermore, among these individuals such aspects related to the organization or the sector itself were not as frequently mentioned. Nonetheless, they identified some generic organizational features – although to a lesser extent – such as the trust that the organization inspires, who the boss is, and the recognition and feedback received from superiors. However, interviewees did not mention other elements often directly linked to the organization, such as size, structure or location.

Similarly, only two people mentioned the element “sector” as a determinant in their job choices. Nonetheless, other cues might uncover elements related to the sector itself. For example, the social impact of the job was the most frequent item mentioned by *The Loyals*, the ones who stayed and currently still work in the public sector. This situation might once again expose the role that value congruence plays among those public employees in their decision to take public

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<sup>7</sup> As I mentioned in chapter two, in my work I employ the definition of Wright and Pandey (2008) according to which value congruence occurs when the employee sees a relationship between his/her public service motivation goals and values and those of the organization. However, I expand this definition by including other values that can also facilitate congruence with the worker in other sectors (e.g., entrepreneurialism in the private sector, volunteerism in nonprofits, etc.).

sector jobs. Additionally, it also evidences the self-recognition of the roles that they play in society and of the social importance of their work.

The observations regarding salaries as a job attribute correspond with the analysis in section 5.3.3. The subjects' responses indicate that salary matters in job choices, but that it is contingent upon other factors. The statements nuanced the role of salary as a job attribute, for instance: "A good enough salary"; "a salary that internalizes all the sacrifices we have to make for the public good," "a salary that is enough to give an appropriate quality of life to my family," "not only salary." This finding is analogous to one of the conclusions in subsection 5.3.3 according to which economic commitments and responsibilities mediate the importance of salary in job decisions, although they do not seem to directly define sector choice.

The preferred attributes according to group distribution reflect some interesting differences across sectors. Whereas *The Loyals* seem to demand time flexibility and teamwork, *The Quitters* and *The Others* tend to place greater value on some elements that are not common in the public sector, namely salary and independence. As for *The Newcomers* there is no pattern in terms of job attributes. This might indicate that some attributes can facilitate satisfaction or even retention for those individuals who are less tolerant of public sector drawbacks.

Overall, the respondents tend to place a high value on attributes that ensure person-job fit rather than person-organization or person-sector fit. Interestingly, most public employees in the sample ranked impact as the most prominent attribute for them, showing that congruence between the purpose and values of the job and the goals of the individual are salient. Conversely, individuals who do not work in the public sector appear to value attributes that are not abundant in the Colombian public sector: Salary, flexibility and autonomy. The following two statements

reflect the similarities but also the differences in terms of preferred job attributes across individuals in different sectors.

Statement one:

Having a leading position, having responsibilities, having the chance to make decisions. I have always been fine with being an employee. I like stability; I like the sense of long-term [...]. I like leadership as a challenge, to demonstrate that you can lead things in the public sector and to show that the public sector achieves goals too [...]. What is the challenge? What I am going to lead? It is not about managing people but about the theme and the impact it can generate [...]. I like to lead public policy, that is interesting, that is the kind of challenge I like.

Statement two:

Challenge, taking risks, not only a good salary, actually I had offers with better salaries, but after working in the public sector I wanted to have the possibility of making a capital. I really wanted to take some risks, so I went to a private investment project, it is important to have good partners, flexibility. I am not starting from scratch, I found a solid structure with my partners, but there is still risk.

In brief, it seems that those in the public sector tend to privilege mission related (intrinsic) attributes while other sector's employees seem to value most extrinsic attributes of the job. Accordingly, perhaps contingent strategies are needed by the Colombian government in order to design jobs (compensation packages, promotion based on performance, incentives, and so on) that are able to both attract and retain talented people who want autonomy, challenges and flexibility, but also to call and retain those who are motivated by the impact of public service.

### **5.3.8 Work Motivation**

Finally, I asked individuals about their main (current) work motivations, which I summarize in Table 11. In this I understand work motivation as an individual process that affects work outcomes and individual decisions, and that is determined by a combination of the

characteristics of the job, the organization and perhaps the sector. From my perspective, work motivation differs from PSM in that it can be extrinsically generated and may be highly variable according to the different attributes and traits of the worker and his or her relationship with the job and/or the organization. In this section I attempt to identify these attributes in relation to job sector choices.

Following a modified grounded theory approach once again, I developed each category from the interview responses. Work motivation appears to be related to aspects such as service orientation and the social impact of the job. In this subsection value congruence appears again to be an overriding element that affects work motivation in all sectors. Even those individuals who work in the private sector mentioned motives congruent with the particular goals of those organizations, for instance, “making my organization grow,” “enjoying the topic,” “solving problems,” or “getting recognition from peers and colleagues.”

Although it is evident that value congruence is important for individuals in all sectors, according to responses from the interviewees (Table 11) it appears that there are some sector differences, as I expected from my definition of value congruence. For those in the public sector, nonprofits and academia work motivation appears to be mainly related to the scope and core mission of the job in terms of its social impact, whereas for those in the private sector, responses were related to the idea of belonging to an organization and making it grow.

In terms of groups of analysis, three members of *The Loyals* group reported being motivated by the potential impact that their job generates and by the opportunity to help others that it brings with it. This again demonstrates the importance of value and goal congruence for individuals within the public sector, just as previous literature has found (Christensen & Wright,

2009). This also corresponds with what I found in the preceding subsection regarding the importance of person-job fit related attributes in job decisions.

**Table 11. Main Responses Regarding Work Motivation**

Work Motivators	Number of Responses	Strong Reference in Group
Feeling that my work has an impact on society	5	<i>The Loyals</i>
Feeling that my work influences decisions/policies	3	<i>The Quitters</i>
Feeling that what I do is useful/change realities	3	<i>The Loyals</i>
Test hypotheses and models, respond questions, solve problems	2	
Feeling that I serve a greater/common good	2	
Getting recognition from my peers and colleagues	2	
Teaching	2	<i>The Quitters</i>
Feeling that my work helps others, improves others lives	1	
Enjoying the topic	1	
Loving the company and what it does	1	
Being coherent with my service values	1	
Make my organization grow	1	
Lead the change in direction of the company	1	
Having my coworkers and subordinates happy of working with me	1	

Still, interviewees' affirmations also reflected other particular views on motivation. For instance, one of *The Loyals* argued that public salience and social recognition of his job in the public sector played a role as critical for him as his ideal desire to serve. One of *The Newcomers*, a top public official, recognized the role that ego can play as a motive when taking positions in the higher echelons of government. Therefore, beyond impact and pro-social behaviors responses reflect rational factors related to power and self-efficacy.

More importantly, responses from people working in governmental jobs also reflect the socialization effect that takes place in the public sector and how it affects work motivation. For instance, a public official proudly explained:

Working in the public sector changed my view of the world, [...] I don't see myself working from the other side, defending those interests we try to control. I do not say that I will not do that, who knows, but I know it would be really hard for me. Being this side makes me feel that I am on the side of the good guys [laugh] I cannot judge and say that guys on the private side are bad guys but [working in the public sector] allows me to feel

that I am doing what I do for the right reasons, not only for my benefit, not only to make money; and it is not that I don't like money, I will be happy if in the public sector they pay more [laugh].

Conversely, it seems that those individuals who initially wanted to find public sector jobs and were unsuccessful in that effort were later able to adjust their motivations to fit into those in other sectors. Similarly, responses from individuals in other sectors reveal that they also find ways to gauge the social impact of their work and derive motivation from it. For example, three of *The Quitters* showed in their answers that although they were not working in the government they were able to gain satisfaction from working on issues with public-sector implications in their nongovernmental jobs.

How does this adaptation of motives operate in the case of those individuals who left the public sector? According to the responses of *The Quitters* it seems that some individuals are less tolerant to characteristics of the public sector, while others are more willing to accept its restrictions and limitations (and in some cases can be motivated by them). This is consistent with Scott and Pandey (2005), who found that individuals with higher levels of PSM tend to be more tolerant of the pathologies of bureaucratic organizations. It is possible to observe this when comparing the following two responses from two individuals, one of *The Quitters* and one of *The Loyals*.

The Quitter:

I suffered a transformation, when I was younger I believed in the importance of generating development from the public sector. I felt there was an obligation to help poor people, and that the best place to do that was the public sector. However, after entering the public sector, I felt it was not true. Several studies and endless diagnoses with low impact, decisions take too long to happen. I had something [...] how do you call that? [Silence] An epiphany? This was not the most efficient form to achieve that purpose.



The Loyal:

For my first job, I contacted a public agency where some friends and former professors were working to improve its operation. The agency was usually charged with corruption and politicization but that, rather than scaring me, attracted me more, since I thought I could make a bigger difference there [...] a romantic view that I could put in my two cents to change the things. The more corrupt the place the more you need better people. Government is for that, it is to serve. There were other public agencies in government that are very "clean" but the added value that I could generate there was greater.

To sum up, in terms of work motivation there are three main conclusions to be drawn. First, work motivation appears to be contingent on the characteristics of the job. Second, although value congruence seems to operate in all sectors, it is explained by different factors in the public and private sectors. In fact, people in each sector find different ways to assess impact. Whereas people in service positions (in the public sector, nonprofits and academia) expressed their motivation to generate social impact or to provide a service to society, individuals in private sector jobs were more likely to express a strong sense of belonging to organizations and to be more concerned about leading change and make their organizations grow. Third, although responses evidenced a clear motivation to serve among those who work in the public sector, it seems that those who do not work in the public sector can also adapt their motives to the circumstances and jobs of other sectors. In fact, individuals in other sectors (nonprofit, private and academia) also show an ideal desire to serve and argue that they aim to contribute to a greater good.

According to the interviews then, value congruence is similarly important in all sectors, but it and other elements that explain work motivation are contingent on the sector in which the individuals work. Hence, PSM, as an attractor and instrument for socialization, might be used as part of a strategy for attracting and retaining talented and motivated candidates who otherwise would adapt their motivation to serve in other sectors. However, there is more to come in terms of work motivation. Individuals value jobs that allow them to change realities, make decisions

and grow. According to this, the greater role of work motivation appears after the attraction has taken place in the day-to-day reality of the job.

## **5.4 Conclusions**

Overall, it seems that in order to obtain work in the public sector in Colombia such elements as previous decisions, connections, the availability of jobs, and certain job attributes play a foremost role. In terms of job attributes, internationally skilled workers seem to look for jobs that generate social impact, that are well paid, that are interesting and challenging, and which provide flexibility for the worker. For this group of individuals, work motivation is mainly determined by the feeling that work has an impact on society, that it influences decisions or policies, or that it changes realities. The presence or absence of these attributes does not necessarily define sector employment. But it does suggest that organizations that are more able to fulfill competitive jobs would be more effective in attracting this kind of talented individual.

How many organizations in the Colombian public sector accomplish this purpose? This is a question for future research. According to the respondents, offers from public employers are usually not as competitive as those from other sectors. It seems that the Colombian public sector needs to become aware of the particular expectations and preferences of qualified workers, like the ones in my sample. In general, the following elements can be inferred from the interviews of eighteen internationally educated Colombians:

*Initial work choices matter:* According to an important number of respondents, it appears that initial work choices define career paths in one sector. This provides evidence for the idea of developing programs intended to recruit individuals early in their careers or right at the moment when they re-enter the market after pursuing graduate education in other countries. A lack of

clear mechanisms by which those individuals might obtain a public sector job may prevent otherwise qualified individuals from pursuing government employment.

*Connections still matter:* Individuals in all sectors recognized the role that connections have in getting a job. Still, these comments were particularly frequent in the case of the public sector. This might indicate a need to institutionalize formal programs in the Colombian government in order to attract and recruit top public officials. Although such programs represent an intervention in the labor market that arguably makes recruitment less efficient, they may encourage more equitable recruitment processes through increased transparency and less information asymmetry.

*Socialization takes place:* According to evidence from the interviews, a preference for one sector does not necessarily entail working in that sector. In fact, the responses reflect that socialization happens in all sectors, although people in government jobs mentioned it more often. While some individuals who did not work in the public sector before recognized the development of a service orientation while working in the government, other former public officials developed a motivation for their work in other sectors. It therefore seems that although PSM can enhance socialization, it does not necessarily ensure retention.

*Jobs in the public sector are not always available for qualified people:* This reflects another angle of the strong role that initial choices and connections have on public sector employment. In general terms, individuals commented on the greater availability of jobs in sectors other than the public sector when they aimed to re-enter the job market. For instance, some individuals who wanted a job in the public sector did not receive a government job offer or the agencies simply did not offer them the jobs that they were seeking. This indicates that the public sector is failing to offer suitable jobs to these candidates and that access to jobs for

internationally educated candidates is not always straightforward in the government. This is a situation which seems to be related to the facts that first, the Colombian public sector tends to reward seniority and connections rather than specialization and education, and second, job offers from public organizations hardly match the demands of qualified people willing to work within the government. Accordingly, the Colombian government might need to devise ways to improve recruitment strategies and the job offers given to highly skilled professionals who demand premium conditions in jobs and have high expectations in terms of professional development.

*These high achievers have a particular set of desirable job attributes:* These professionals demand challenging, enjoyable jobs that permit them to make a social impact. They expect to find well paid jobs designed to reward their efforts of having acquired further education and international-level skills. Individuals in this group expect to find jobs flexible enough to be compatible with other personal goals and responsibilities. This generation of professionals is not satisfied by the traditional stability that the public sector used to offer as a comparative advantage, but rather expects to find rewards in terms of salary, promotion, leadership and professional growth as well. Responses reflect that Colombian public organizations have not necessarily kept up with the changing needs of these qualified professionals.

*For different reasons, value congruence is an important determinant in all sectors:* While those in the public sector, nonprofit and academia tend to value the social impact of their jobs, private sector employees value other attributes related to the organization. Since PSM can be understood as value congruence between the employee and the organization in terms of impact or service, it seems that the Colombian public sector cannot only rely on that congruence to attract qualified individuals, even with a strong orientation towards service, as some of them leave the public sector to take for-profit jobs. This implies that PSM itself, beyond initial

employment, does not necessarily ensure greater performance or lower turnover rates. Thus, specific strategies designed to increase work motivation might be designed not only to attract but also to retain motivated public officials.

In brief, the elements that I find in my qualitative research might define a recruitment and retention agenda for the Colombian public sector. If it wants to attract the most talented employees possible to public service, public agencies need to develop more aggressive recruitment strategies and also offer competitive, challenging and stable jobs that increase work motivation and satisfaction for highly skilled professionals. On the other hand, greater institutionalization, open information about unfilled vacancies, and transparency in recruitment, as well as retention strategies, can reduce the negative role of connections on the allocation of jobs and make them more accessible to suitable candidates. Finally, public organizations have strong potential in terms of improving understanding of the congruence of values with the worker, for instance through communication (Wright & Pandey, 2008). I move forward to explore these proposals in greater detail in chapter six in the policy recommendations subsection.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW TO BUILD AN ELITE FORCE FOR THE COLOMBIAN PUBLIC SECTOR?**

In the last two decades some academics and practitioners have argued that the employment abilities of the government have systematically deteriorated. They have argued that causes such as the indiscriminate adoption of NPM practices, the anti-state political strategies of neo-conservative governments, citizen discontent, and fiscal stress, among others, have worked to diminish the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer. However, there is little empirical evidence as to whether this phenomenon is truly taking place.

Such paucity of empirical research is also present in the context of developing countries, where the state is a key actor in the developmental agenda. In order to understand whether such a phenomenon is taking place this work aims to make an inquiry into the reasons that make the public sector attractive (or unattractive) for highly educated job candidates in the context of a developing country. Accordingly, I aim to provide a response to the question: What are the determinants of choosing one specific sector of employment? Answering this question will help to understand the traits of public sector employment in an unexplored setting such as a developing country.

Different studies have identified the lack of a qualified work force in the public sector as a problem that is endemic among Latin American governments (Echebarría & Cortazar, 2007). In this way, it makes sense analyzing the motives and drivers of the job sector decisions of highly qualified workers in a Latin American country and to ask them how they see government employment in comparison to other sectors, especially outside mainstream countries (the U.S., Anglo-Saxon countries, and Western Europe). This dissertation aims to contribute to this goal by

opening the door for further research in human capital management in Colombia. Therefore, I aimed to analyze the attractiveness of the Colombian public sector among a group of highly qualified professionals by identifying the determinants of job sector choices, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Accordingly, in this last chapter I present the conclusions of this work. In the first subsection I recall the main results from the quantitative analysis, as well as some key findings from qualitative research. Later, a series of conclusions from the mixed analysis provides the basis for some policy recommendations. I suggest some strategies for improving the human capital management of highly skilled people and top managers in Colombia. Finally, I end with some topics for future research.

## **6.1 Is the Colombian Public Sector an Employer of Choice for Individuals with High Levels of Qualification?**

According to quantitative evidence, factors such as PSM, salary and preference for the public sector operate as strong determinants of public sector employment among internationally educated Colombians. The statistical results also corroborate that in the Colombian context women, younger employees and former public officials are highly unlikely to choose jobs in other sectors over a public sector job. Consequently, it is possible to answer the question as to whether the Colombian public sector remains an attractive employer for certain subgroups of highly qualified individuals.

Perhaps the main contribution of the statistical analysis in chapter four is the analysis of the relationship between PSM and job sector choice within the context of an unexplored setting, that is to say, a developing country with complex social problems like Colombia. The evidence in my research indicates that, in effect, PSM plays a role in attracting individuals to the public

sector in this country. Highly skilled Colombians with high levels of PSM tend to work in public organizations, rather than in other service-oriented organizations like nonprofits.

Furthermore, the quantitative results also provide evidence regarding the retention abilities of the public sector in Colombia. They show that the longer a person's experience in governmental agencies is, the greater the probability that the individual will retake a public sector job after pursuing graduate education abroad. The results also show that professionals who express a desire to take a job in the public sector after the completion of their studies were coherent with their previous preference and made their job choices consequently.

According to the econometric results, one of the elements that seem to propel public officials into other sectors is the duration of work contracts. Fixed-term contracts have become a common practice in Colombian public organizations, especially for highly qualified people. Such contracts, less frequent in the private sector (particularly for managerial and technical positions), emerge as a factor that reduces the attractiveness of public sector jobs in Colombia. Despite this, the statistical evidence from this dissertation indicates that the Colombian government is, as an employer, able to retain and attract particular groups from the population of highly skilled workers.

My qualitative research focused on the roles that personal antecedents, job attributes and work motivation play in job sector choices. According to evidence from the interviews of eighteen Colombians who received graduate education abroad, it seems that in order to get work in the Colombian public sector elements such as previous decisions, connections, availability of jobs, and other particular job attributes play a foremost role. It also appears that value congruence (the individual values' fit with both the job and the organization's values) is highly influential on the levels of work motivation.



In general, the following elements can be inferred from the interviews of eighteen internationally educated Colombians: 1) Initial work choices matter and define later career paths; 2) connections affect the availability of jobs and the available information regarding job openings; 3) socialization happens in the work place in the public sector but also in other sectors; 4) jobs in the public sector are not always available for the most qualified people – in fact, seniority and connections remain important criteria for the allocation of public sector jobs, especially at the top; 5) these skilled workers have a particular set of desirable job attributes that (together) are not necessarily abundant in the public sector, namely social impact, salary, challenge of the job and flexibility, among others; 6) work motivation operates in similar ways across sectors; a congruence between the individual's values and the organization appears in both the public and private sectors.

I will now explore some combined concluding elements from both the qualitative and quantitative components of my research. Those insights are relevant for proposing some policy recommendations regarding the attractiveness of the Colombian public sector as an employer, particularly among people with high levels of qualification. They aim to contribute to the discussion of job sector choices and their interaction with other organizational aspects in the context of a still informal civil service like the Colombian one.

Accordingly, I identify three key elements from my conclusions that can serve both the discipline and practice. On the one hand, they can help to improve an understanding of the way people with high levels of education makes job sector choices. On the other, they can inform top human capital management strategies in the Colombian public sector. These three topics are: 1) The difference between PSM and work motivation, and their effects on attraction and retention,

2) the difference between sector preference and sector choice, and 3) the role of some job attributes and motives in attracting individuals to the public sector.

First, PSM and work motivation have an effect on job sector choices, yet apparently with different relationships to the job itself. The quantitative evidence shows that PSM increases the probability of an individual taking a public sector job. In other words, it improves attraction. On the other hand, the qualitative findings evidenced that work motivation appears to be strongly related to value congruence (understood as identification between the individual's and the organization's values and goals) developed during day-to-day work experience. According to these conclusions, whereas PSM is highly influential in early stages, work motivation appears to explain later organizational outcomes (not covered by my research), such as socialization and retention.

Both elements provide input for human capital strategies. The Colombian public sector might benefit from recognizing this distinction in order to develop different strategies for increasing both attraction and retention. For example, communication strategies that aim to underscore the impact of public sector jobs can, as certain authors such as Wright and Pandey (2008) and Moynihan and Pandey (2007) have argued, help to reach people with high PSM, but can also help to facilitate the process of value congruence with workers. Indeed, I agree with Moynihan when he asserts that in order to increase some organizational outcomes public sector jobs could be pre-set on the normative values of those who want to join them.

Alternatively, although some authors have questioned the real impact of PSM after job choice (Wright, 2001), we can return to Frederick Mosher who argues, "The image of the service is framed in home and in college, particularly in professional school. One's choice of a field of study is the beginning of self-recruitment" (1968, p. 16). Since some groups are captive to the

public sector (women, youngsters, former public officials) customized campaigns can therefore help to ease access to government jobs for those individuals who find coherence between their own and public sector values. For instance, early recruitment campaigns in universities can facilitate the access of qualified people and anticipate their migration to other service-oriented organizations. The recruitment of MPAs and MPPs might actually ease access to public sector jobs for individuals with expected high congruence with public service values, something that scholars have mentioned is unlikely to be implemented by means of a PSM filter (Leisink & Steijn, 2008).

Second, sector preference may define sector choices, but the low availability of suitable jobs seems to reduce its actual effect. The quantitative evidence shows that not only previous public experience, but also previous preference to work in the public sector, are strong determinants of choosing a job in the public sector. However, the qualitative analysis indicates that the overarching role of connections and seniority in the public sector discourages motivated people to work there. The primary role that these criteria play in recruitment, selection and promotion might affect the quality of the workforce.

Although networks can convey information about jobs to suitable members of small technical groups and/or epistemic communities, its overarching use may unnecessarily constrain the pool of eligible candidates and the transparency of the process. In fact, the lack of an open recruitment processes reduces the opportunities of other skilled people who are outside of those networks. In this way, the formalization of the recruitment and promotion procedures of highly skilled professionals can improve the transparency and the equality of opportunities at the top level of the Colombian civil service. Open access and merit-based systems can help to call those talented individuals who can become unenthusiastic to take public sector jobs.

Third, qualitative responses indicate that highly skilled workers generally seek jobs with attributes related to challenge, impact and content of the job. This set of internationally skilled workers appears to prefer jobs that generate social impact (independently of the sector), are adequately paid, interesting, flexible and challenging. On the other hand, the quantitative evidence indicates that attributes such as salaries and indefinite term contracts are relevant in public employment. In conclusion, public sector jobs appear to be well paid, challenging, interesting, with high social impact but with a short-term horizon, which reduces its attractiveness by conveying a picture of unstable career paths in the public sector.

Overall, these three elements shed light on future human capital strategies in the public sector in Colombia. They confirm that person-job fit is a strong determinant of job sector choice, as Leisink and Steijn (2008) also argue. Accordingly, job enrichment and job design strategies (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) can be used by the Colombian public sector as strategies for increasing the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer of choice for this group of highly skilled people. How can these insights be used to design a strategy to increase the recruitment of highly skilled people in Colombia? In the next subsection I propose a course of action that can help this country's public sector to configure a body of highly technical officials for the highest echelons of government.

## **6.2 Policy Recommendations: Attracting the Captive and the Unwilling**

The main conclusion of this work is that the Colombian public sector remains an attractive employer, especially within certain groups of the population, but that others still remain doubtful about taking a public sector job. Indeed, the government still has to attune its recruitment strategies in terms of salaries, duration of contracts, open access and transparency, among other aspects. Moreover, the results open a dual question about what the Colombian

government should do, that is to say, either facilitate the access to government jobs for captive groups or, instead, attract qualified individuals who work in other sectors. The answer, according to the quantitative and qualitative evidence, is that, in regular conditions, both strategies are necessary if the Colombian government wants to increase the critical mass of highly qualified people, particularly within top government. Having said that, in presence of budgeting constraints, the scarce resources should be devoted to attracting those talented individuals who do not consider the public sector as an appealing employer. The marginal effect of focusing the recruitment actions on bringing skilled individuals to the government would be greater than spending money on those workers who will naturally seek government jobs.

As mentioned in the problem definition chapter, the Colombian civil service exhibits a strong coexistence of merit-based practices, political patronage and cronyism. At the top, the Colombian civil service is highly reliant on networks and professional communities that concentrate information about available positions and thus maintain a significant number of positions in government (Gomez et al., 2007). Some of these networks operate as facilitators in the attraction and recruitment of highly technical people who otherwise would not be easily reached by government agencies. However, they can also build closed information monopolies regarding available positions in both technical and managerial public sector jobs. According to qualitative interviews, the prevalence of these mechanisms changes from organization to organization, while some seem to rely more consistently on merit-based practices, others have informal mechanisms of recruitment and selection.

Although statistical results show that women, young people and former officials are strongly attracted to the Colombian public sector, qualitative evidence indicates that, in general, highly qualified people think government employment is uneasy to reach, connections-based and

uncompetitive in terms of contracting options. This combination of factors can repel suitable candidates and subsequently affect the government's ability to maintain a competitive workforce. For instance, when Colfuturo graduates rejoin the Colombian labor market they become potential candidates for jobs in any sector, considering that they are highly skilled, bilingual and have attended first-class educational institutions around the world. Yet whereas the public sector tends to adopt a passive approach, other sectors deploy more appealing strategies for them. In this way, it might be reasonable to propose a more proactive plan of action in order to make access to public sector jobs easier and more transparent.

To summarize, the results offer enough evidence of the need to extend access to public sector jobs for women, young professionals and former public officials, but also to develop actions to attract other talented individuals from different backgrounds who typically would not consider the public sector as an attractive choice. In addition, other specific actions can help to increase the recruitment of those individuals who after graduate education, even without previous experience in the public sector, might feel attracted to public service but do not find easy ways to enter into the public sector.

Beyond this, the Colombian public sector needs to take into account the importance of offering competitive and challenging jobs with compensation packages that satisfy the expectations of workers with high levels of qualifications. For instance, both the qualitative and quantitative findings indicate that higher salaries work as attractors, but also reveal that other elements, such as duration of contracts or recruitment mechanisms, appear to push people towards other sectors. In this way, such aspects can be instrumental in the design of a more proactive policy for human capital management at the top of the Colombian public sector.

Accordingly, I propose a twofold policy recommendation. Each proposal is based on different insights obtained from my research. First, the Colombian government might start early (right after college) the recruitment of highly talented people through a high-flyer career program, and/or through a large-scale internships program, in order to ease access for recent graduates of college and graduate school. Second, considering people with higher levels of education and experience, the Colombian government might consider creating a Senior Public Service (SPS) program for the recruitment of middle to top managers and public officials.

Whereas the first proposal attempts to improve access for those groups that are typically more attracted towards public sector jobs, the SPS program, while still serving that purpose, can help to identify other potential candidates from less inclined backgrounds. I explain each of these in the following paragraphs. First, the government can implement scouting campaigns at colleges to identify high flyers who will learn by practicing the "art" of government. Such a program might gain inspiration from the actions of private companies, which do not save resources to attract high flyers right before they leave college. Although such practices can be found among governments of other countries, they have not been explored in Colombia, at least not as a nationwide program.

According to qualitative evidence, once an individual enters the career system in Colombia it is very unlikely that he or she will be promoted to higher positions or will have an ascending career. This implies that those who first join the government are only either highly motivated youngsters who are willing to accept low pay and resist the complexities of the recruitment procedures necessary to take a governmental job, or those who join thanks to political patronage (particularly at the local level). In this way, the high flyers programs used by governments around the world (for example, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands), which

provide fast tracks for promising youngsters who become trainees of the organizations of the government, can be a source of inspiration. These programs help to facilitate the configuration of a group of highly committed individuals from the beginning of their careers, who will develop a strong ethos and sense of belonging and who have the potential to become the top public managers of the future. Such programs are usually focused on training generalist public officials, versatile individuals characterized by a strong technical and managerial focus.

Alternatively, an internship program oriented towards all new graduates can ease access for people with a preference for working in the public sector. By providing a fixed-term practice it can enhance the way the public organizations identify and build a critical mass of workers. This program may actually provide a sort of long-lasting recruitment process, which can help to assess and select those individuals who are more promising for government jobs. This internship program, besides providing a low cost workforce (who will receive extensive training in exchange), might generate some socialization effects. For instance, by introducing public values to a potential body of workers and by allowing them to develop work experience in the public sector. Crucially, this increases attraction according to my results.

One inspiration for such a program is the Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF) existent in the United States. This program works in close collaboration with universities and colleges across the country and allows open access to federal government jobs for individuals across the entire country. It is based on values of diversity and excellence within the government and provides equal access opportunities for individuals without consideration of socioeconomic background, race/ethnicity, and geographical location, among others. The program is highly selective and opens the door for long-standing careers at the ministerial level and within other highly technical organizations. A Colombian PMF, like the high flyers program,



can help to configure a diverse set of officials who will be able to continue a career in government according to their performance.

Finally, the SPS program is targeted at candidates with more experience and higher levels of education, like the ones in my sample. An SPS might be defined as a highly technical body of top officials that will be in charge of the continuity of public policies in the executive branch of the government and will operate as a link between the top administration (elected officials) and the career civil service. This elite force will also be in charge of leading, planning, designing and managing the actions of government at its top level. Its members, selected through competitive selection, receive competitive pay and the promise of long-term professional development at the top of public administration.

Such a separate senior civil service program can gain inspiration from the several Senior Public Service (SPS) or Senior Executive Services that exist around the world. Those programs have become overriding actors in the configuration of top management in different countries, even in similar Latin American countries. Manifold examples can be found, just to mention a few, in the U.S. (Senior Executive Service), in Brazil the so-called "gestores" (Especialista em Políticas Públicas e Gestão Governamental), in Singapore (Administrative Service), in the United Kingdom (British Senior Civil Service), among several others around the world.<sup>8</sup> According to the characteristics of SPS programs, and considering that they are targeted at individuals similar to the ones in my sample, I devote the next section to describing the main elements from the literature that can guide the design of such a program in the Colombian case.

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<sup>8</sup> Most of these programs have been in operation since the late 1970s and very few have been discontinued, except the Argentinian (*Administradores Gubernamentales*) and the Pakistani programs, the latter of which was closed shortly after the country gained independence from Britain, Mukherjee (2004).

### **6.3 A Strategy to Attract the Most Talented – An Elite Force for the Colombian Government**

I can hardly aspire in these pages to provide any adequate treatment of the interrelationship of the history of public services with the evolution of societies. But an aspect of that interrelationship has recently come to inquiry by one interested in the current public services: The interlocking of the evolution of education and that of the public services, particularly of the “elite” personnel at the higher levels. (Mosher, 1982, p. 27)

Frederick Mosher was able to foresee the developmental implications of the education of the civil service, especially at the top of the civil service. For Mosher (1968, p. 40), the democratization of the higher public service is highly related to the expansion and the enlargement of educational opportunities across society. He showed how different reform efforts in developed countries aim to open access to the highest echelons of government as a strategy to enlarge their economic, administrative and political capabilities in response to increasingly complex societies.

These insights provide a unique basis for my main policy recommendation: The design and implementation of a Senior Public Service program in Colombia as a strategy for improving the quality of the government workforce. Through such a program the Colombian government might not only make the allocation of positions in the government more transparent and democratic, but also increase its technical and administrative capacities. In this section I start describing an SPS, its origin and main characteristics. Later, I explore some benefits of its implementation, as well as the necessary institutional framework for its operation. Finally, I offer caveats about possible obstacles in the implementation of the SPS and end with some conclusions.

What is a Senior Public Service program? Mukherjee (2004) defines it as a small group of officials appointed to top level positions across government, usually located in policy making in national government, who work closely with ministers and senior political leaders and who are generalists rather than specialists. In his account, such a program usually represents less than 1%

of the national civil service, which means that it is highly selective and operates under a separate strict code of ethics from the rest of the civil service. He also remarks how SPS members receive high levels of compensation and training, and their promotion is entirely determined by performance.

An SPS program is therefore a specialized body of highly technical officials, independent from the head of state, selected by way of strong merit-based competition, adequately rewarded and incentivized, in receipt of permanent training and oriented to results.<sup>9</sup> It is a group of officials who work closely with ministerial and technical authorities, but also with political leaders. The members of this SPS usually have a strong focus on innovation, leadership skills, modern management and analysis techniques. According to the experience of several countries that have designed similar programs, Fleury (1999) defines an SPS as “a high civil service that is capable of serving the political authorities, being committed to the public interest, using technical and managerial value skills that could be highly demanded also in the private sector.”

Members of an SPS program are in charge of ensuring adequate communication between political masters and career bureaucrats, and are envisioned to ensure government continuity at the top level. Its members are characterized, among other elements, by strong management and technical skills, high political knowledge and ability, leadership, high performance levels, generalist knowledge of the state, strong esprit de corps and a strong commitment to public values. As Mukherjee puts it, the key assumption in such a program is that “high academic achievers can acquire ‘soft’ skills and knowledge of government via training and career management. These, and the sophisticated political judgment they acquire through working

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<sup>9</sup> One of the key aspects of the programs is its selectiveness. Mukherjee shows that countries like India select only 0.1% of applicants. In fact, one key trait of SPSs is that they remain deliberately small, not surpassing the number of 5,000 (India) or roughly 8,000 (USA), both of which are currently the largest in the world.

closely with the political executive, are intended to create successful public sector managers” (2004, p. 4).

Why have some countries designed such programs? When Frederick Mosher thought about the democratic character of the civil service and the impact of the actions of its elite, most Senior Executive or Personnel Programs were still not even created. However, SPS programs appeared during the last two decades as a strategy to recruit an elite of committed, competitive and highly qualified public servants.

According to Mukherjee (2004, p. 4) governments created such programs looking for individuals with managerial focus, leadership, innovation, communication and professional competence. Fleury (1999) remarks on the need for commitment, empowerment and accountability at the top level as a justification for their creation. Such emphases allow the program to serve the goal of creating a new culture in government, which might appear as a foremost expectation from SPSs. Fleury (1999) remarks that the purpose of these highly qualified administrators is to transform public goals into government action, that is to say, to make more effective governmental actions.

The SPSs were adopted in civil services primarily through emulation from country to country, a phenomenon that was particularly clear across Anglo-Saxon countries (Ingraham et al., 1999). One of the earliest programs was that of the British, which appeared in response to the elitization of the civil service identified by the Fulton Report in 1968. Consequently, through the design of a separate senior civil service the Britons aimed to increase the opportunities of professionals from more diverse backgrounds than the predominant Oxbridge one.

In other countries, SPSs also appeared as part of efforts to modernize the civil service and attune it with comprehensive state reforms that required a body of capable and competent

managers. Fleury (1999) illustrates how one of the reasons for the SES program to emerge in the US was a conclusion from the Executive Service Task Force, which showed how most public managers did not have relevant education and/or experience in public management and administration. Thus, some SPS programs were also intended to reduce that gap and to increase the managerial skills of top officials.

What kinds of positions are suitable for such a program? In general, it covers top technical and managerial positions in most government agencies at the central level, but also increasingly at the state and municipal levels of government.<sup>10</sup> It can involve positions for top technical advisors, directors and deputy directors of technical units, among others. However, this is one of the hurdles that the program has to face. As Mosher (1968, p. 185) warned, in programs like these there is usually little agreement as to which positions and specific jobs should be included. In any case, the experience shows that the technical characteristics of the job should define eligibility in order to achieve a healthy balance between necessary political appointments and merit based appointments through the SPS.

What purposes can a Senior Public Service serve? First, a SPS helps to reduce the costs of turnover in the top government. Mosher (1968) argued that there was a contradiction in political appointments since, at the end of the government terms, several of these officials, often with superior technical abilities, would like to stay in the government but have no means for doing so. In a similar vein, Naim (1994) argues that there is an inverse relationship between tenure and hierarchical level that generates permanent brain drain in the Latin American civil services. This high level of turnover is costly for public agencies and the government as a whole. The relatively short period that the appointees stay in office generates a systematic loss of organizational

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<sup>10</sup> The experience of the "gestores" in Brazil started at federal level and was followed by most states that now have senior programs for their civil services.

knowledge and affects policy continuity every two or four years. According to this it might be strategic to establish a pool of qualified candidates intended to maintain the organizational memory of the state and ensure policy continuity. In this way, establishing a body of competent managers and technocrats provides a useful balance, not only between political leaders and career civil servants, but also in the transition from government to government.

Second, such a program can help to truly prepare and train managers to manage. Mosher illustrates that political executives, who are virtually unknown, inexperienced in government and with very low political liability, are the ones who usually define important government actions. This is evident in Colombia where non-career professionals fill several technical positions in the top government, oftentimes with little knowledge of the intricacies and frustrations of the public sector and who only come for temporary terms to key government jobs. This has a cost in terms of the lack of a permanent group of top managers and specialists educated and trained to face complex realities in public organizations. Therefore, the proposal of creating a senior civil service program in Colombia might help to build a group of officials who learn by experience to manage and make decisions in a complex environment.

Third, a merit-based SPS makes the recruitment and selection of senior officials more democratic and open to all suitable candidates. The transition from a developing country with a civil service where patronage practices still have a preponderant role, even at the top (Gómez et al., 2007), towards a highly technical and diverse top management requires concrete actions. In this way, a senior public service in Colombia can introduce more transparent mechanisms to ensure equal opportunity access to the leading positions of government. The program should intend to facilitate the participation of external candidates but also encourage the promotion of internal career public administrators, who usually face a glass ceiling that impedes their

promotion to the highest levels of public administration. Likewise, a program like this can also help the Colombian government to configure a more representative top civil service, for instance, in regional terms, since it is said to be overrepresented by people from the capital. Overall, by establishing open and publicized merit-based procedures, an SPS makes the flow of information about jobs more available for all suitable candidates and improves the level of participation for excluded actors.

Fourth, an SPS might also help to reduce unnecessary pressures from external actors, and to reduce the risks of corruption. If the SPS is allowed with adequate incentives and rewards, and is isolated from political interference, it could help to downgrade the role of particular interests. It might also reduce the impact of revolving doors and nongovernmental interests on collective decisions. Shielding the program against politicization is a necessary condition for its success. As Mosher states, “Where political appointments invade too far the province of the respective career services, there is a threat to substantive effectiveness, an invitation to inefficiency and even scandal” (1968, p. 185). Although political appointments should still be present, the allocation of jobs through merit-based procedures can help to rule out narrow interests.

Fifth, a SPS can help the reorganization of the entire civil service. It can operate as a pilot for the integration of separate civil services and the compression of independent career programs that introduce anarchy to the system and reduce direction and control. Additionally, such a program can help to promote the representative role of the bureaucracy in all senses relevant to Colombian society (for example, geographically, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and background, and so on). In different countries, the insertion of a SPS was part of a larger strategy to reorganize and modernize their entire civil services.

Sixth, it can also help to build a strong esprit of corps and public service ethos among its members. Ingraham et al. (1999) and Perry and Miller (1991) illustrate how bureaucratic bashing does not only negatively affect public officials' motivation but also the confidence of the people and perceptions of agency performance. However, scholarship has also indicated how recognition of the value of public officials' work can increase their performance (Selden & Brewer, 2000). Therefore, an SPS program can help to improve the morale of public officials and offer a more appropriate environment for public service. For instance, highly competitive selection in countries like Korea, India or Brazil has helped to develop greater social recognition and prestige for senior public officials. A selective SPS equipped with adequate compensation and opportunities for personal and professional development can help these purposes.

Seventh, a program like this can also contribute to increasing society's appreciation of the role of government. Since the Colombian public sector is affected by low confidence within society (Carlson & Payne, 2003, p. 131), such a program can help to build public trust, as Perry and Miller (1991) show for the Senior Executive Service in the United States. According to the authors, one of the reasons behind the SES program in the U.S. was the high value that professionals and specialists receive in that country. A similar situation is possible in Colombia where technocrats and internationally educated people are highly valued in society and the job market (Dargent, 2011; Palacios, 2001). In this way, calling the best available candidates to the top of the government can help to redefine a new imagery for public sector jobs and actions.

Who will run the program? A particular institutional setting is required for this. A technical agency at the presidential level should operate the program with high technical standards. It should also be competent and legitimate enough to ensure its isolation from political and particular interests. It should be in charge of defining the size and the suitable positions for such



a program in close work with each ministry and participant agencies. The experience of Brazil, which located the program at a highly technical office (Ministry of Planning, Budgeting and Management) rather than in the politicized and less technical civil service agency, is illustrative of the importance that the allocation of the SPS has for the re-organization of the entire civil service. According to Mukherjee, the management of the program can be decentralized or centralized. However, according to economies of scale, and the positive effect that centralization has on the quality of selection and the development of esprit of corps, most countries have followed a centralized model.

As Mukherjee (2004, p. 10) notes, an SPS should avoid the danger of becoming a self-serving elite that rewards and/or perpetuates itself. According to him the program should be subject to oversight from an independent civil service supervisory body isolated from and subject to strong judicial review. Mukherjee (2004, p. 11) underscores how in weak institutional environments (such as the Colombian one) there would be enormous pressures to downplay the features of an SPS program. There would be pressures to enlarge it (or either to dismantle it) and politicians would be highly interested in affecting selection criteria and methods. This is why it requires technical direction from the higher levels of government and external control, in order to ensure continuity after each change in office.

Some other caveats about likely obstacles in the design an implementation of SPSs can be made at this point. First, although the political environment for these sorts of programs is different in each country (Ingraham et al., 1999), SPSs do not come without controversy and opposition, especially considering that they aim to reduce the influence of clientelism practices within government. Even today, institutionalized SPS programs in countries with highly developed civil services have to overcome strong obstacles and external pressures. However, the

program should be explicit in portraying benefits for political actors (that is. more technical and highly committed staff), as well as ensuring balance with necessary political appointments (for example, appointments on grounds of trust).

Second, as Fleury (1999) illustrates, some opponents can argue that adopting an SPS is nothing more than a guise to adopt private sector practices in the public sector. However, although it probably entails the use of modern management techniques, it strongly resorts to the distinctiveness of government and the value of public bureaucracies, a practice far from managerialist strategies that downplay the role of the public sector. Similarly, an SPS is far away from the usual action of bringing unprepared private sector managers who, unaware of the pressures, legal demands, due processes and low discretion, face a potentially frustrating prospect and thus, very often, offer poor results. Therefore, beyond eroding public values or bashing the public sector, an SPS highlights its value and attempts to improve the ethos of the bureaucracy and the esprit of corps among top bureaucrats.

Third, some could argue that a separate career system for those at the top may exclude other officials. However, an SPS has the potential to imply greater inclusion, especially if it becomes a source of advancement for career officials too. If it is entirely separated then some frictions can emerge when officials from the SPS program interact with career public officials with similar educational levels, for a sense of exclusion can be generated among the latter. Yet, if the system is adequately designed to ensure open access to both external and internal candidates, and selection is made on the grounds of performance (rather than connections or seniority), such problems can be avoided. Career civil servants should see the SPS as a platform for further professional development.

Last but not least, according Mosher (1968, p. 18), the elite of the civil service needs to develop a strong foundation in public values. For instance, values like equality of opportunity, open and free society, merit, diversity and representativeness, among others that society consider to be relevant. Consequently, the strong emphasis on merit in the SPS should be counterbalanced by other criteria aside from technical knowledge. An SPS has strong potential to highlight aspects of public service ethics, public interest and public values such as justice, fairness and equality (Mosher, 1968, p. 238). Furthermore, a merit based system for those at the top, does not only ensure open access, greater representativeness, transparency and higher qualifications for the SPS alone. Beyond this, it has strong potential for linking direction, leadership and expertise with democratic and public service values.

In conclusion, by providing an attractive, well-rewarded and promising career at the top of government an SPS can help to achieve one of the recommendations from this and other related works (for example, Lewis & Frank, 2002, p. 402). That is to say, it can help to provide an easy way to obtain a public sector job. Furthermore, a well-designed SPS has the potential to open the door for a more transparent and competitive body of highly technical officials who will be in charge of leading the government and ensuring policy continuity. Still, it should be remarked, as Mukherjee (2004, p. 10) puts it, that SPSs are not an indispensable element of government. Despite this, an increasing number of countries have started to use them in response to failing efficiency-oriented reforms and in the aim to improve leadership and innovation in public management. In fact, as Fleury observes from the conclusions of the National Performance Review, a SPS program has strong potential to make improvements in government performance without the profound (and costly) structural adjustment reforms that have proven to be less effective.

## **6.4 Future Research**

This dissertation had the goal of analyzing the attractiveness of the Colombian public sector for people with high levels of qualification. However, future research endeavors should confirm these results within a more ample population, that is, the general work force of the Colombian civil service. Such a study can increase external validity by providing a more general perspective of the way individuals make job sector choices in a developing country. On the other hand, it might also consider developing a time series in order to avoid the endogeneity threat and to disentangle the role of socialization in job sector choice.

However, in spite of the external validity issue, further studies about highly qualified people in other developing countries might be undertaken in order to understand better how to manage this particular work force. For instance, an important spin-off of this dissertation project would be a study that makes inquiries into the relationship between PSM and retention. In this way it can help to disentangle the retention phenomenon that was observed in the quantitative analysis in chapter four regarding the positive effect that previous public sector experience has on future public sector employment.

Another stimulating project that can be developed from the findings of the qualitative research in chapter five is an analysis of the determinants of work motivation. Further research is required to conceptually separate work motivation from the PSM construct. The findings of this work provide an interesting basis to inquire about elements from the person-environment fit that can help to better explain what happens with work motivation after a person decides to pursue a career in government, something that even scholarship from developed countries is still asking. I would like to undertake a similar study with a more diverse sample of candidates.

In any case, beyond helping to disentangle and explore questions relevant to public management literature in the context of developing countries, this research plan can also help

practice in countries where empirical public administration scholarship is scarce. In this way, further research has strong potential for helping to improve the way that countries plagued with problems like Colombia recruit the people who will be in charge of solving them.

## **Appendix A: Instrument Online Survey of Colfuturo Participants**

The following survey was designed to assess the impact of Colfuturo in shaping public sector elites in Colombia. Your answers will provide arguments for justifying greater state involvement in the international training of public servants. Thank you for taking this short survey of 12 multiple-choice questions. The information is strictly confidential. Your participation is critical to understanding the impact of international education in Colombia.

To answer questions 1-5, grade each of the arguments from 1 to 5 according to their position, with the two ends being 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

La siguiente encuesta tiene como objetivo obtener una medida del impacto que Colfuturo tiene en la conformación de las elites del sector público en Colombia. Sus respuestas brindarán argumentos para justificar una mayor participación del Estado en la formación internacional de los servidores públicos. Le agradecemos tomar esta corta encuesta de fácil respuesta y apenas 20 preguntas de selección múltiple. La información es absolutamente confidencial. Su participación es fundamental para la comprensión del impacto de los estudios en el exterior en Colombia.

### **I. First Section. Job Attribute Preferences.**

1. From the following job attributes indicate what were the three most important in choosing jobs after studying abroad with Colfuturo (1 being the most important to you): \*

De los siguientes atributos indique cuáles han sido los tres más importantes al escoger sus empleos después de estudiar en el exterior con Colfuturo (siendo 1 el más importante para usted): \*

- a) La flexibilidad de horarios/Schedule flexibility.
- b) Las oportunidades de ascenso y proyección profesional/Opportunities for advancement and professional development.
- c) Beneficios no salariales (ej. carro, medicina prepagada, colegio de los niños etc.)/ Fringe benefits (e.g., car, medical insurance, schooling of children, etc.).
- d) El prestigio social del cargo/The social prestige of the office.
- e) Contrato a término indefinido/Long-term contract.
- f) El impacto social del trabajo/The social impact of the work.
- g) La independencia para trabajar/ Independence for work.
- h) El tema del trabajo/The theme of work.
- i) El sector de empleo (que sea privado, público, sin ánimo de lucro, etc.)/The sector of employment (private, public, nonprofit, etc.).
- j) La compatibilidad con las responsabilidades familiares (hijos, pareja, etc.)/Compatibility with family responsibilities (children, partner, etc.).
- k) El nivel de confianza que le genera la organización/The level of confidence that the organization generates.
- l) El salario/The salary.
- m) Las oportunidades de aprendizaje/Learning opportunities.

- n) Los retos del trabajo/The challenges of the job.
- o) El jefe/The boss.

## II. Second Section. Public Service Motivation.

2. Rate your level of approval of each of the following statements:

Califique de 1 a 5 cada uno de los argumentos de acuerdo con su posición, siendo los dos extremos 1=en total desacuerdo, 5=en total acuerdo.

**Strongly Disagree**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

**Strongly Agree**

- a) Un servicio público con un propósito es importante para mí/Meaningful public service is important to me.
- b) No tengo problema en pelear por los derechos de otros, incluso si significa que me ridiculicen por ello/I am not afraid to go to bat for the rights of others even if it means I will be ridiculed.
- c) Estoy dispuesto a hacer sacrificios por el bien de la sociedad/I am prepared to make sacrifices for the good of society.
- d) Las situaciones del día a día me recuerdan frecuentemente cuan dependientes somos los unos de los otros/I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another.
- e) Lograr un cambio en la sociedad significa más para mí que los logros personales/Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievement.

## III. Third Section. Employment.

3. In which of the following sectors did you take your first job after finishing your studies abroad with Colfuturo?

En su primer empleo, luego de terminar sus estudios en el exterior con Colfuturo, ¿en cuál de los siguientes sectores se empleó ?

- a) Sector Público/Public.
- b) Sector Privado/Private.
- c) Organización Sin Ánimo de Lucro-ONG/Nonprofit.
- d) Academia/Academia.

4. Your contract in that first job was a:

Su contrato en ese primer trabajo fue:

- a) Contrato a Término Indefinido/Long-term contract.
- b) Contrato a Término Definido/Short-term contract.

5. Have you moved to another job after that first job?

¿Ha cambiado de trabajo luego de ese primer empleo?

- c) Si/Yes.
- d) No/No.

6. In which of the following sectors did you take that second job?

En ese segundo trabajo luego de finalizar sus estudios en el exterior ¿en qué sector se empleó?

- a) Sector Público/Public.
- b) Sector Privado/Private.
- c) Organización Sin Ánimo de Lucro-ONG/Nonprofit.
- d) Academia/Academia.

7. Your contract in that second job was:

Su contrato en ese segundo trabajo fue:

- a) Contrato a Término Indefinido/Long-term contract.
- b) Contrato a Término Definido/Short-term contract.

8. If in the future you have to change jobs, or want to make a job change, in which of the following sectors would you prefer to work?

Si en el futuro tuviera que cambiar de empleo o quisiera hacer un cambio laboral ¿en cuál de los siguientes sectores preferiría emplearse?

- a) Sector Público/Public.
- b) Sector Privado/Private.
- c) Organización Sin Ánimo de Lucro-ONG/Nonprofit.
- d) Academia/Academia.

#### **IV. Fourth Section. Socio-demographics.**

9. The highest level of educational attainment of your parents was:

El máximo nivel educativo alcanzado por sus padres fue:

- a) Primaria/Primary.
- b) Bachillerato/Secondary.
- c) Estudios Técnicos o Tecnológicos Completos/Technical-Technological Studies.
- d) Pregrado Universitario/Undergraduate Degree.



e) Posgrado/Graduate.

10. Was one of your parents a public official?

Fue alguno de sus padres funcionario público? Si/Yes. No/No.

11. Did one of your parents have any involvement in political activities?

Tuvo alguno de sus padres alguna participación en política? Si/Yes. No/No.

12. The school in which you completed your secondary education was:

El colegio en el cual finalizó sus estudios de bachillerato era:

- a) Privado Bilingüe/Private Bilingual.
- b) Privado/Private.
- c) Publico/Public.

13. Your current socioeconomic level is:

Su estrato socioeconómico actual es:

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. Your socioeconomic level when you finished secondary school was:

Su estrato socioeconómico al finalizar el bachillerato era:

1 2 3 4 5 6

15. Where would you locate yourself in the following political spectrum?

Si se tuviera que ubicar en el siguiente espectro político, dónde se ubicaría de acuerdo con su ideología política:

**Left** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **Right**

## **Appendix B: Questionnaire for Interviews – Qualitative Approach.**

### **I. Job sector choice after graduate study abroad.**

1. In which sector were you working before studying abroad? After finishing your graduate education abroad, did you want to stay in the same sector of employment? Why?  
¿En qué sector trabajaba antes de estudiar en el exterior? ¿Y, después de estudiar en el exterior, permaneció en el mismo sector? ¿Por qué?
2. Did you find the job that you wanted, in the sector that you wanted, right after pursuing graduate education abroad? Why?  
¿Después de estudiar en el exterior encontró el trabajo que quería, en el sector que quería? ¿Por qué si o por qué no?
3. How do you think that attending the university that you attended for your graduate studies abroad affected your career and sector decisions after finishing your Master's or Ph.D.?  
¿Cómo cree que el hecho de estudiar en la Universidad que estudió posgrado en el exterior afectó su escogencia de empleo y sector de empleo posterior?
4. How do you think that studying the graduate subject that you studied abroad affected your job sector decision after finishing your studies?  
¿Cómo considera que haber estudiado el posgrado que estudió en el exterior afectó su decisión laboral y de sector después de finalizar?
5. How do you think that studying in the country that you studied affected your job sector decision after study abroad?  
¿Cómo cree que haber estudiado en el país que estudió afectó sus decisiones de escogencia de empleo y sector de empleo al terminar sus estudios en el exterior.
6. How do you think that economic factors affected your decision of joining a particular sector after study abroad?  
¿Cómo cree que factores económicos influyeron en su escogencia de empleo y sector después de estudiar en el exterior?
7. How do you think that your sense of social responsibility and civic duty changed after study abroad?  
¿Cómo cree que su sentido de responsabilidad social y ciudadana cambiaron después de estudiar en el exterior?

### **II. Social and Personal Aspects of Job Sector Choice.**

8. Think of your closer Colombian fellows who attended the same graduate university abroad, how have they affected your job choices? Your job sector choices?  
¿Cómo cree que el grupo de personas que conoció al estudiar en esa Universidad en el exterior afectó su posterior decisión de empleo?
9. How do you think your parents affected your career decisions?  
¿Cómo cree que sus padres han afectado sus decisiones de empleo y carrera profesional?

10. How do you think that your academic and extracurricular activities as a child/teenager affected your job sector choices?  
¿Cómo cree que las actividades académicas y extra académicas durante la primaria y la secundaria afectaron sus posteriores decisiones de empleo?

### **III. Work Motivation and Job Preferences.**

11. What is the prime motivation for doing the work that you do? Any other?  
¿Cuál es la principal motivación para hacer lo que usted hace? Otras motivaciones?
12. What element is the most important for a job to be attractive to you? Other secondary elements?  
¿Cuál es el elemento que hace más atractivo un trabajo para usted? Qué otros elementos?
13. What do you like about working in your sector? What don't you like?  
¿En qué sector trabaja actualmente? Qué le gusta de trabajar en el sector en el que trabaja? ¿Qué no le gusta?
14. What are the main words/images that come to your mind when you hear the phrase "a job in the public sector"?  
¿Qué se imagina cuando oye la frase "un trabajo en el sector público?"

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