

**From Public to Private Sector: Motives and Explanations for
Higher Educated State Employee's Sector Switch**

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Abstract:

Sector switching is an interesting phenomenon which only recently has entered the research on public organizations. It is interesting in relation to understand how to get and keep people working in the public sector as well as to understand public and private differences. This paper focuses on why public employees leave public organizations to work in the private sector instead of just shifting to another public organization. We use a longitudinal design studying higher educated people who recently worked in the state but who have shifted job, comparing those who shift job to another public organization (either state or local government organization) with those who switch to the private sector. We focus on a range of different types of motives for and against switching to the private sector. We find that higher wage level is a more important motive for job shift for people that switch to the private sector while job security keeps people from sector switching. Desire for flexible/flat organizations and room for drive and creativity seem to be motivation factors for switching to the private sector. Regarding public service motivation we find that serving society keeps people from sector switching while a focus on creating value for end-users of services is related to sector switching from public to private.

INTRODUCTION

Sector switching has only received scant attention in the literature, though recently the issue has entered the research on public organizations (Bozeman and Ponomariov 2009; Su and Bozeman 2009a; Su and Bozeman 2009b). Yet, sector switching is related to key areas such as how to get and keep people working in the public sector as well as understanding public and private differences (Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman, and Anker 2008). However, most studies have focused on the motives and consequences of switching from the private to the public sector. This paper focuses on why people leave public organizations to work in the private sector instead of finding a job in another public organization. We use a longitudinal design comparing those who shift job to another organization within the public sector with those who switch from the public to the private sector. We focus on a range of different types of motives for and against switching to the private sector. These are based on classical arguments from the literature on public and private differences (see e.g. Perry and Rainey 1988; Rainey and Bozeman 2000; Boyne 2002; Rainey and Chun 2005; Rainey 2009): salaries; job security; desire to work in less bureaucratic organizations with more strategic influence and room for drive and creativity; and finally public service motives such as working for society and end-user of services.

Understanding why people stay and find another job within the public sector or leave to join the private sector is of great interest in regard to public organizations that need to attract and keep people especially higher educated people. This will be even more so in the future due to the aging of the population (Tschirhart et al. 2008). Moreover, it has often been argued that there is a lack of empirical research on public and private differences. Sector switching is a rather interesting phenomenon when it comes to understanding these differences. Furthermore, many of the differences between being employed publicly and privately were proposed before New Public Management was introduced to the public sector. These classical claims are worth a study so as to ascertain whether the differences can still be found in the public and private sectors today.

The empirical tests are based on a unique Danish data set with 894 respondents who all have a higher education and all worked in a state government organization for some time within the period 2005 and 2006 and then in 2007 have shifted to another state government, local government or private sector. Our focus is on the differences in motives of those who shift job but stayed in the public sector, and those who switched job to the private sector.

THEORY

Research on sector switchers:

Only little research attempts to understand shifts between sectors, i.e., employee's motives and the barriers for such sector shifts. (Tschirhart et al. 2008). Generally, it has been argued that sector preferences are rather fixed (Tschirhart et al. 2008). However, studies show that there is a significant amount of sector switching. It is therefore relevant to study why some people stay within the public sector and why others switch to the private sector. There are studies of why people work in specific sector and how this related to their preferences. For instance Lewis and Frank (2002) show that for example job security and the opportunity to be useful for society are important for people working in the public sector. When it comes to why people switch sectors some studies focus especially on understanding why private sector employees switch into the public sector. These studies show that it is more often people in managerial positions who switch into the public sector (Su and Bozeman 2009a) and also that sector switching into the public sector generally increases people's career opportunities, that they are more likely to be promoted and get to supervise a greater number of people (Bozeman and Ponomariov 2009). Moreover, it is shown that the differences in values of the sectors are perceived to be similar by both public to private and private to public sector switchers (de Graaf and der Wal 2008). However, some very relevant questions remain unanswered. For example, why do people leave the public sector to work for the private sector?

Tschirhart et al. (2008) show why people work in specific sectors and whether this is related to their desire. Yet, there still lack research investigating why people actually switch to the private sector.

Understanding sector shifts are especially important because there has been some blurring between the boundaries of public and private organizations in the last decades (Jørgensen 1999). It is therefore also relevant to understand whether important differences remain after several decades of New Public Management. Recent studies show that there are still important differences between people working in public and private sectors, especially in relation to their values (Tschirhart et al. 2008). Furthermore, public organizations are expected to incur problems finding qualified people in the future, especially higher educated people, due to the aging problems in most western countries. This highlights the importance of understanding why people leave the public sector for the private sector.

Hypotheses:

There is not a lot of specific literature on sector switchers. In the labor economics literature many studies pertain to job shifts and shifts in job type or industry but few of these studies look into sector switches (Su & Bozeman, 2009a). In the public administration and public management literature there is a huge literature on why people work in the public and private sector, yet the bulk of this is related to more general studies on public and private differences (Boyne 2002, Rainey 2009). In the following we highlight the main arguments in this literature and propose a series of hypotheses related to sector switching based on these.

The first argument for people to work in the private sector is also the one most frequently stated: people in the private sector have higher salaries than people in the public sector. Many studies support that people earn more money in the private sector, though the issue to large degree depends on the sector area and organizational level in which you are working (Donahue 2008). In our case

with higher educated employees, it is the expectation that people earn more money in the private sector. Yet, in our study the important issue is not necessarily how much people earn. Instead, we emphasize the importance employees place on salary. For instance, Boyne argues that public managers are less materialistic based on a meta-study (Boyne 2002). The focus here is whether the expectation of high salaries influences sector switching. Rainey (2009) argues that many studies show that people working in the public sector place less importance on money as a goal of work. This goes especially for people working at higher levels and for professionals (Rainey and Bozeman 2000). Feeney finds that public managers driven by financial motives have more positive views of the private sectors (Feeney 2008). And because the general opinion tends to be that people earn more money in the private sector, we propose the following hypothesis for why people sector switch:

H1: Salary level is a more decisive motivating factor for public employees who shift job to the private sector than for public employees who shift job to another public organization

The second main argument in the literature on public and private difference is that people employed in the public sector have better job security. It has also often been shown empirically that public jobs are attractive for people who want job security (Baldwin 1991, Lewis and Frank 2002). E.g. in a study by Houston (2000), he finds that people working in the public sector place more importance on job security. This may especially be the case at lower levels, though the differences can also be found on higher organizational levels. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Job security is a less decisive motivating factor for public employees who shift job to the private sector than for public employees who shift job to another public organization

There are also several arguments for people to work in the public or private sectors which are related to the organizational factors. In the literature some differences are said to relate to how flexible and flat the organizations are, how the strategic influence is distributed in the organizations, and how much room the organizations leave for personal drive and creativity. All these factors could be important factor for sector switching. We expect that the desire for more flexible and flatter organizations is related to a switch to the private sector because public organizations are often characterized as bureaucratic. Boyne argues, for example, that public organizations are more bureaucratic than private companies. He highlights this as one of the few empirically evident differences between the public and the private sectors (Boyne 2002). Also, we expect more influence on strategic decision making to be related to more switching to the private sector, because public employees are more limited when it comes to their strategic influence (Rainey 2009), e.g., because they are more constrained due to the political mandate (Moore 2000). Finally, the bureaucracy and red tape in public organizations are also argued to make the room for drive and creativity smaller than in private organizations. For instance (Tschirhart et al. 2008) find a preference for entrepreneurial work is associated with private employment. Therefore, we expect that the desire for room for drive and creativity is positively related to a switch to the private sector. Based on the above we therefore propose the following hypotheses:

H3a: Desire for more flexible and flatter organization is a more decisive motivating factor for public employees who shift job to the private sector than for public employees who shift job to another public organization

H3b: Influence on strategic decision making is a more decisive motivating factor for public employees who shift job to the private sector than for public employees who shift job to another public organization

H3c: Room for drive and creativity is a more decisive motivating factor for public employees who shift job to the private sector than for public employees who shift job to another public organization

In the literature there is also a discussion of the differences between the public and private sector employees' public service motivation (Perry 1996; Crewson 1997; Houston 2000). The argument is that other things motivate people in public organizations than in private companies. Especially on higher levels and professional levels, people working in public organization place higher value, for example, on working for society (Rainey and Bozeman 2000). However, recent literature has argued that public service motivation is multidimensional (Vandenabeele 2008), and maybe some of the dimensions of public service motivation are not necessarily related to the public sector (Andersen & Pedersen 2010). For example, some studies have shown that working for the end-users is a public service motivation which is often present in private organizations (Andersen & Pedersen 2010), though other studies show that helping others is more important in public organizations (Crewson 1997, Tschirhart et al. 2008). This interest in helping others may nearly be termed so that it relate to public sector employment while we investigate whether the motive is to create value for the end-users, which may be important in both sectors, and maybe especially in the private sector with their customer focus. On the other hand, a classic concern of public service motivation such as serving society is more of a public sector phenomenon (Crewson 1997, Perry 1996). In connection to public service motivation we propose the following hypotheses:

H4a: Working for purposes of the society is a less decisive motivating factor for public employees who shift job to the private sector than for public employees who shift job to another public organization

H4b: Creating value for the end-user is a more decisive motivating factor for public employees who shift job to the private sector than for public employees who shift job to another public organization

Most of the hypotheses above are based on classic differences from the public administration and public management literature. We use these arguments to construct rather common sense arguments for motives for why people work in the public and private sector, and more specifically why people

shift organization within the public sector or move to the private sector. The issue in this paper is therefore: do these classical motives hold when we study the choice of sector when higher educated people shift job and organization? In the following we test these hypotheses. We also control for other factors that may possibly be related to sector switch. These are differences in age, gender, children living at home, tenure, managerial differences, educational background, and number of job shifts.

DATA AND METHOD

The survey and the respondents

This study is based on survey conducted by AC, The Danish Confederation of Professional Associations. Their overall goal with the survey was to study mobility between the sectors (state government, local government, and private sector) in Denmark. The nonprofit sector is not included, but this is very small in Denmark. The survey includes people with a higher education who are or have been employed in the state government in the period 2005 and 2006. The survey in general distinguishes between people who were employed in the state government organization or changed from a state government organization to another state government organization, local government organization or private sector or changed into the state government organizations from either local government or private sector. The survey was conducted in the spring of 2007. The respondents were found using the database of *The State Employer's Authority*. This covers Danes employed in the state government in the period 2005 and 2006. The dataset is purged for duplicates. The addresses for respondents were provided by *The National Board of Health*. Overall, this population includes a larger number of people with different higher educations. For instance, it includes people with degrees in law, business administration, economics, public administration, political science humanities, engineering, science, health sciences, agricultural sciences, as well as officers from the army. Before the data collection the respondents were contacted by letter and given information on the survey. After this respondents were contacted per telephone and asked

whether they preferred to do the survey via a telephone interview or via a web-survey. The total number of respondents in the survey was 5,088 whereof 2,929 answered the survey resulting in a response rate of 64 per cent.

We are interested in studying people who shift organization to understand potential differences in motives for job shift between those who stay in the public sector and those who shift to the private sector. Our focus is not on why people enter the public sector because we do not have a comparable group of people who stays in the private sector. Also, as formerly argued, several studies investigate why employees sector switch into the public sector (see e.g. Bozeman and Ponomariov 2009; Su and Bozeman 2009a), while there is very limited research on why people employed in the public sector switch to the private sector. We only include people who have had a job shift to another organization either within state government, from state government to local government or from state government to the private sector. The reason for not including people who remain in the same organization is that generally there may be other motives for staying in an organization than for shifting to another organization. We therefore have more comparable groups by comparing job shifters within the public sector with job shifters who switch to the private sector. Our data set therefore includes the following respondents:

Table 1 The respondents' last job shift between organizations

	Number
Job shift from one state organization to another state organization	373
Job shift from state government to local government	150
Job shift from state government to private sector	371
Total	894

Each group of respondents had their own questionnaires, all with groups of identical questions, making a comparison possible. As described our main issue is to understand why people who shift job switch to the private sector instead of staying in the public sector. Our focus is therefore, not on the differences between different kinds of job shifters within the public sector, whether they shift to another state organization, or whether they enter local government. Naturally, these are interesting but are not the issue here.

Variables

The dependent variable in this study is whether a person working in the state government within some time period in 2005 and 2006 has shifted job to either another public organization or to a job in the private sector at the time of the questionnaire (Spring 2007). We coded this 1 if they work in the private sector and 0 if they have shifted job to another public organization (state or local government). By doing so, we can observe comparable difference in motives for job shifts.

Importantly, the questionnaire does not ask people why they shift to the private sector or stay in public organizations. It only asks why they shift job. This may reduce the potential problems with people answering what they believe is expected of them in regard to public and private differences – social desirability bias (King & Bruner 2000).

As proposed earlier there are several motives for why job shifters switch sector. The survey includes measures for these different motives. They are mostly single item measures. Under the heading motives for job shift there is a number of factors that the respondents are asked to evaluate a number of factors pertaining to the overall question “Which factors were decisive for that you changed job your job”. These questions regarding whether a motive is a decisive factor were measured on a scale from 1 to 4 going from whether the motive was a decisive factor “To a large degree”, “To some degree”, “To a minor degree” or to “Not at all”. Finally, there was also a

category for “Do not know”. We use these measures of the motives to test our hypotheses. We reversed the measures and coded the “Do not know” as missing value. To measure whether salary is an important motive we used the question whether “*Wage level*” is a decisive factor for change of job. Moreover, there is a question whether “*Job security*” is a decisive factor to change job. To measure *strategic influence* the question is whether “Extent of strategic responsibility” is a decisive factor to change job. Furthermore, the survey includes a measure of whether *room for drive and creativity* is a decisive factor to change in job. Moreover, there is also a measure for *flexible and flat organization* measured by whether “Desire of more flexible working procedure / flat organizational structure” is a decisive factor to change in the job. To measure public service motivation hypotheses for sector switching regarding *creating value for end-users* and *servicing society* we use the questions whether “The experience that my work creates value for the end-user” and “The experience that my work serves a useful purpose for the society” are decisive factors for to change in the job.

Moreover, we introduced into our models various other factors that may explain the sector switch apart from these propose expectations. We control for *gender* and *age*. We also include a dummy for whether participants have *home living children* measured as whether they have one or more children living at home under the age of 15. These have been argued to be of importance for sector shifting (see e.g. Tschirhart et al. 2008). Moreover, we include variables for educational background. Here, we have dummy variables for whether their longer education is from a *social science education* (which includes law, business administration and economics and public administration/political science), a dummy for *humanities education* and a dummy for *science/engineering education* (which include science and engineering educations, and finally a dummy for *officer education*, e.g. from the army or navy. Moreover, we include a variable for *tenure in former job* measured in years, and a variable for *salary in former job* measured as salary including pension per month. We control for the *former job level* the person is working at. We measure this as whether they are reporting their job as a) ordinarily employed (administrative

officer, Ph.D., assistant or associated professor, consultant etc.), b) manager with management responsibility for employees, or c) manager with management responsibility for other managers. These three management levels are coded 1 to 3, respectively. Moreover, we include a variable for the overall *number of job shifts* the person have had. This is measured as 0; 1; 2; 3-5; or more than five job shifts. These are then coded 0 to 4, respectively.

Methodology

We use logit models for investigating whether former state government employees sector switch. The logit models are applied because we are interesting in a dichotomous variable measuring whether people shift job to another public organization or to the private sector and thereby making a sector switch. We run a model which only includes the control variables and a full model including all variable to see the effects of our hypothesized variables. We test for multicollinearity by constructing variance inflation factors. These are all below 3 which did not indicate any serious problems (Kennedy 1998).

RESULTS

In the following we report the result of the study. In Table 2 we have the descriptive statistics for those who shift job to another public organization and for those who shift job to a private sector organization (sector switchers).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	Job shift to another public organizations			Job shift to a private sector organizations		
	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
Age	522	41.72	7.12	371	40.68	6.90
Gender (women=1)	522	0.51	0.50	371	0.40	0.49
Home living children	522	0.31	0.46	371	0.36	0.48
Former job level	522	1.21	0.47	371	1.24	0.49
Tenure in former job	522	5.64	4.59	371	7.25	5.46
Salary in former job	467	35628	9300	355	35715	8458
Number of job shifts	522	2.92	0.66	370	2.77	0.74

Education: Social science	522	0.51	0.50	371	0.40	0.49
Education:						
Engineering/science	522	0.18	0.39	371	0.29	0.45
Education: Humanities	522	0.13	0.34	371	0.09	0.29
Education: Officer	522	0.02	0.14	371	0.06	0.24
Wage level	518	1.88	1.03	368	2.49	1.03
Job security	515	1.99	1.09	368	1.88	1.04
Flexible and flat structure	514	2.13	1.13	368	2.45	1.15
Strategic influence	513	2.17	1.16	359	2.26	1.12
Room for drive and creativity	516	2.63	1.17	369	2.94	1.06
Serving society	516	2.80	1.12	367	2.44	1.07
Creating value for end-users	515	2.90	1.11	368	2.95	1.07

In Table 3 we see the results for the logit models studying whether people sector switch or they shift job to another public organization.

Table 3 Logit models for job shift to private sector versus another public organization

	(1)	(2)
Age	-0.07 ^{***} (0.02)	-0.07 ^{***} (0.02)
Gender (women=1)	-0.19 (0.15)	-0.13 (0.17)
Home living children	-0.39 [*] (0.17)	-0.43 [*] (0.19)
Former job level	-0.07 (0.20)	-0.07 (0.22)
Tenure in former job	0.09 ^{***} (0.02)	0.09 ^{***} (0.02)
Salary in former job	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Number of job shifts	-0.09 (0.12)	-0.06 (0.13)
Education: Social science	-0.38 (0.22)	-0.62 [*] (0.25)
Education: Engineering/science	0.40 (0.24)	0.60 [*] (0.27)
Education: Humanities	-0.23 (0.29)	-0.27 (0.33)
Education: Officer	0.41 (0.47)	0.00 (0.54)
Motives for job shift		
Wage level		0.52 ^{***} (0.09)
Job security		-0.17 [*] (0.08)
Flexible and flat structure		0.20 [*] (0.08)
Strategic influence		-0.10 (0.08)
Room for drive and creativity		0.24 [*] (0.09)
Serving society		-0.73 ^{***} (0.12)
Creating value for end-users		0.37 ^{**} (0.12)
_cons	1.84 ^{**} (0.57)	0.75 (0.70)
<i>N</i>	821	787
<i>Pseudo R</i> ²	0.0624	0.1833

Standard errors in parentheses; * significant at 5 %, ** significant at 1 %, *** significant at 0.1 %. All tests are two-tailed.

In model 1 in Table 3 we see the results for the control variables only. We find that age is negatively related to a private sector job shifts, and that having children living at home is also negatively related to a shift to the private sector. On the other hand longer tenure is positively associated with a private sector shift. All three results are also found in model 2 where the hypothesized variables are included. Here, we find that higher wage level as a decisive factor for job shift is positively related to job shifts from the public sector to the private sector as expected in hypothesis 1. However, job security is negatively related as a decisive factor for a shift to the private sector which is in line with hypothesis 2. Flexible and flat structure, and room for drive and creativity as decisive factors for job shift are both positively related to a shift to private organization compared to a shift to another public organization as expected in hypothesis 3a and 3c. Finally, for public service motivation the results show that working for the useful purposes for society as a decisive factor for job shift is negatively related to a private sector shift, while working for the end-users is positively associated with a private sector shift. These latter two results support hypotheses 4a and 4b.

Discussion and conclusion

Most of our results support the expectations from the literature on public and private differences which here have been used to deduce these motives for sector switching. Yet, most of our expectations have not formerly been tested in the context of sector switching. No design has to our knowledge compared groups of job shifters within the public sector with job shifters that switch to the private sector. Our study therefore helps us to better understand public and private differences empirically. This is an area with a lack of empirically evidence. This is particularly so for studies that also control for other influences apart from public and private differences (Boyne 2002).

However, the main contribution of the study is that it helps us understand why people switch sector, and more specifically why they shift from the public to the private sector. Generally, there are very

few studies of sector switching and even fewer studying of why people switch to the private sector. This study emphasizes some very distinct motives for people to sector shift to the private sector for instance that salary level is important. Wage level may be an issue which it is difficult for public organizations to change. However, the study may have other more managerial implications. For example, a way to keep higher educated people in public organizations could be to change organizations so they become more flexible and flat in structure with more room for drive and creativity since these elements were primary motives for shift to the private sector. Though, more research is needed to understand these mechanisms more fully, this study show some indicative results which may be linked to New Public Management in which focus, for instance, is on less bureaucracy and more entrepreneurship (Pollitt and Bouckhaert 2004; Osborne and Gaebler 1992). However, there are counter arguments against such changes, for example that public organizations' employees are limited by their political mandate, and that accountability has a growing influence which generally will reduce the room for drive and creativity.

In connection to public service motivation the results demonstrate the need to understand the multidimensionality of public service motivation, because we see that serving society is strongly related to staying in the public sector, while serving the end-users are related to a private shifts. The multidimensionality of public service motivation is not new. For example, Vanderabeele (2008) also find that there are different dimensions and Andersen and Pedersen find that private sector employees have higher user orientation but not that this would have a negative influence on future employment in the public sector (Andersen & Pedersen, 2010). However, our results is a very concrete example that public service motivation may have strong implications due to the fact that it influences sector switching when studied in relation to higher educated state employees. However, that serving end-users is associated with private shifts may also have some implications for public organizations. For instance this emphasizes the need for public organizations to let their employees better understand how their specific tasks are related to the end-users in order to keep people from

shifting. However, there may also be a bias in the data set, because we study state government employee who shift. These could be expected generally to be further away from the end-users than e.g. employees in local government. However, in an analysis not reported here, which was also based on the data set, we find no evidence of major differences in decisive motive between people who shift either to local and people who shift to another state government when it comes to creating value for end users.

A natural limitation with our study is that we only have the respondents' motives post their job shift. There may be some degree of post-rationalization taking place. Future research would benefit from looking into people's motives before they get the job though this will require some very unique research designs. In order to understand sector switching; there is generally a need for longitudinal studies. For instance the status of the private economy may have an influence on cross-sectional studies of sector switching because the ability to switch to the private sector depends on the rate of job growth at the time of the study. Also, other events at the specific time of study may influence the findings. In our case the survey was conducted during a major public reform in Denmark which also may have influenced the results. However, this reform was not focused on the boundaries between public and private organizations. Neither did it address downsizing in public organizations. It concentrated on changing the structure inside the public sector especially in regard to the relationship between local, regional and state levels (Agreement on a Structural Reform, The Danish Ministry of the Interior and Health 2004). Therefore we do not expect this reform to have major influences on the motives for sector switches, though the reform may have increased the overall level of job shifts in the studied period. A reservation about our study is its lack of inclusion of those who have switched earlier or those who have a predisposition to do so. However, compared to the longitudinal studies based on register data, for instance, our research design has the potential to focus on specific motives reported through the survey. Compared to most cross-sectional

questionnaires our design has the advantages of data on the sector switch from other sources. We know they were employed in a state organization which they then shifted away from.

Future research may also benefit from looking more closely into the specific job types people sector switch to and from. Some job changes are more conducive to a sector switch, e.g., when Ph.D. students finish their dissertation, or when people employed in the army reach a specific age and their contract finish. In this paper we only study sector switching at the aggregated level. Looking more thoroughly at the specific job types, we also see that the sector switches in some cases are rather minor changes for the employee because there occur in a grey zone between public and private employment. There is also a need to understand whether sector switches are a result of push or pull factors. That is, whether people are pushed away from a specific sector because of, for instance, downsizing or whether they are pulled into a sector as a result of, for instance, headhunting.

Also, future research needs to understand whether people get what they expect in relation to their motives for sector switching. For instance, are the new private organizations in general more flexible and flatter, and do they leave more room for drive and creativity? Several studies have examined wage level before and after job shifts, but it will also be highly interesting to see this related to, for example, work hours. Furthermore, our results are only based on higher educated people, while it is relevant to investigate whether there are similar motives for people with less educated. These people may for example not necessarily have the same motives regarding room for drive and creativity.

Moreover, we do not include data on people who stays in the same public organization and what their motives are for staying compared, for example, to people who shift to other public organizations? Do they e.g. stay because they cannot get another job? These people are also very

relevant to study because some of them will switch later. As can be seen, the issue of sector shifting is an area with a lot of unanswered questions. Answering these would aid greatly our understanding of the mechanism of sector switching but also more generally aid our understanding of the public and private differences. Furthermore, more quality research into sector shifters will be of great value for our understanding of public and private differences, and especially in relation to the mechanism of sector shifting. For instance, de Graaf and van der Wal's (2008) study on value differences between sectors is very interesting because through interviews with shifters both public to private and private to public it shows that both kinds of shifters perceive the value of the respective sectors similarly. Moreover, it would be relevant to study whether the same motives for sector shifting apply in countries much different from Denmark, which is characterized for example by a rather positive attitude towards the public sector compared to for example the US (Greve 2006). It could also be useful for future studies to examine private to public switchers in settings different from the US like for instance that found in Denmark.

The findings of the paper also raise a further question – why do people who sector switch to the private sector work in the public sector in the first place? This may be because they did not have other opportunities than working in the public sector. Public sector employment may also have disappointed the employee. Alternatively, the person's motives have changed, e.g. due to differences in life stages. The findings of our study only highlight that people who switch to the private sector instead of just shifting to another public organization have other motives for their job shift.

Overall, this study has shown that a lot of the classic and common sense arguments for working for the public and private sectors, respectively can explain why some public employee choose to shift to the private sector. However, the study highlights the need to understand the dynamics of these sector shifts.

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