

An Empirical Study on Public Service Motivation of the Next Generation Civil Servants in China

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Abstract

Why do the Chinese university students choose government jobs instead of private companies? Do they have similar job motivations as those who are seeking private sector jobs? Surprisingly, literature on public administration in China has rarely posed this question despite China's adoption of the civil service system since 1993. Specific examination of public service motivation (PSM) literature also revealed a lack of empirical studies on the public service spirit of *potential* public sector employees. This article analyzes the differences in job motivations between public and private job seekers using survey data of 329 Chinese university students from the Peking University, Renmin University, Fudan University, and Nankai University. The results suggest that both private and public job seekers commonly rank “stable and promising future,” “high salary,” “chance to exercise leadership,” and “high prestige and social status” as the most important motivators. Notwithstanding the commonality, public job seekers, especially female students, show higher public service spirit than private job seekers.

Keywords

public service motivation, university student, civil service

Introduction

Why do university students in China choose public sector jobs? Do they have similar job motivations as those who seek private sector jobs? Surprisingly, Chinese public administration literature has rarely posed this question despite its emphasis on

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recruiting talents to civil service. One might argue that the empirical examination of job motivation of Chinese university students may be an unnecessary endeavor given that the number of applicants always surpasses the number of available public jobs. In fact, as of 2009, there were 1,050,000 applicants for civil service jobs—This averages out to about 77 applicants per available civil service position (Gan & Xiang, 2009). Given such a strong demand for civil service positions and such high competition among Chinese university students, lavishing special attention to recruitment of competent university students, and thereby the study of their job motivation, may appear to be unnecessary to both Chinese public managers and scholars of public administration. However, the high demand for civil service positions does not necessarily reflect a high level of public service spirit among Chinese university students nor the fact that the latter deem civil service positions as their ideal vocations.

Given the prevalence of corruption, demoralization, inefficiency, and an authoritarian organizational culture, a sizable portion of the Chinese student population tends to hold a negative view of the Chinese public service. In addition, the salaries of Chinese civil servants are found to be relatively lower in comparison to private sector jobs.¹ This is over and above the fact that the private sector is able to provide a more attractive career development path to talented Chinese university students in light of rapid economic development in China. Despite these negative images of public service and more promising aspects of private sector jobs, why do university students choose public sector jobs over those available in the private sector? Do they have unique job motivation compared with that of private job seekers?

Public service spirit is of primary importance among the various issues on how to manage human resources; it even transcends the Chinese university students' personal preference for occupation. This is largely a result of the vast growth of the Chinese administrative system, which leaves the Chinese population highly dependent on its civil servants who provide a wide range of necessary public goods and services that directly affect the overall quality of the Chinese public service. If Chinese civil servants do not possess a high level of public service spirit and are committed to serving their personal interests instead of serving the interests of the public, both the quality and the legitimacy of the Chinese civil service will be seriously undermined. Rampant corruption in China reflects a serious deficit of public service spirit observed among incumbent Chinese civil servants and naturally raises the concern of public service spirit of potential civil servants.

The study of Chinese university students' public sector job motivation can contribute to the theory building of public service motivation (PSM). The job motivation of public sector employees and the importance of public service have been studied in the name of PSM (Perry & Wise, 1990) in public administration literature. The PSM research insists that public employees have unique motivation as compared with private ones, including a special calling to contribute to the community, a strong service-orientation of helping others (Frederickson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Perry, 1997), compounded by lesser response to extrinsic rewards such as high salary (Crewson, 1997; Rainey, 1982). However, there is a reasonable concern as to whether this PSM theory developed within the U.S. context, where public sector jobs were deemed to be less attractive than private sector ones, is applicable to the Chinese civil service, which

recently established out of the former communist cadre system in 1993 and enjoys higher popularity than the private sector among university students.

Meanwhile, it is not clear whether the popularity of the public sector is the key factor in drawing high public service spirit holders. Some Chinese argue that university students' job choice is driven by job security and self-centered motivations, rather than by public service spirit. This argument is contradictory to the proposition by Perry and Wise who argued that "the greater an individual's public service motivation, the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization" (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 370). The absence of empirical studies on the public service spirit of Chinese university students reinforces the untested postulation that public sector jobs enjoy immense popularity given self-centered decisions motivated by extrinsic motivators such as job security, high salary, and prestige.

To fill this knowledge gap on the job motivation of Chinese university students, this article analyzes the students' job motivation according to their sectoral job choice using survey data of 329 Chinese university students from Peking University, Renmin University, Fudan University, and Nankai University. They are the top universities in China and produce a large number of civil servants. In order not to lose the contextual uniqueness of China, we control for family influence on job choice, perception of the fairness of civil service exam, years of education, gender, and perceived level of corruption of civil service.

This article has two major distinctive aspects compared with previous studies. First of all, most PSM studies have studied on-the-job motivation of *incumbent* public employees and implicitly assume that people with high public service spirit choose public rather than private sector jobs. However, this proposition has not been empirically tested as we have attempted to do in this article. Second, this article applies the PSM concept to China, which is currently reforming its public administration and is home to unique cultural traditions, including familism, Maoism, and Confucianism, which impacts several aspects of the public service in China. This application can thus contribute to comparative studies of PSM.

This article proceeds as follows: Before analyzing university students' job motivation, we briefly review the evolution of the Chinese Civil Service and the challenges it faces. Following the review of the PSM theory, we address theoretical hypotheses mainly tested in current literature. These hypotheses are tested after discussion of research methods and data. Finally, we provide theoretical and practical implications of our findings to conclude this article.

Context of the Chinese Civil Service and Importance of Job Motivation of University Students

The civil service based on a merit system is fairly new to China. In 1993, Prime Minister Li Peng launched the first administrative regulation of national civil servants' management, which established the foundation of the civil service system in China. This reform implies the transition of the Chinese public personnel management from a cadre-based system to the civil service system.

The cadre-based system characterizing the Chinese personnel management before the 1993 reform was not about “rule by law” but “rule by man.” Government officials were assumed to serve the interests of proletariat, rather than those of all people. In the cadre system, the Chinese government staffed cadres from university graduates, demobilized soldiers, state-owned enterprises, and other service units (Burns, 2001) according to their political loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and their social class background. Sometimes, the CCP even decided for which agencies university students should work. The assignment of duties was random and under the total control of the CCP rather than with consideration of talent or capacity of the individuals. Within this cadre system, developing human capital and expertise of civil servants were regarded as a minor goal of public personnel management. Instead, there was a high risk of the abuse of power and corruption, reflecting that the major goal of personnel management was thus personal enrichment of those in positions of authority (Tsao & Worthley, 1995).

To overcome these problems of the cadre system, the 1993 reform was mainly directed toward developing a merit-based system. One of the first effects of the reform was the establishment of the civil servants’ entry examination by the Provisional Regulations on State Civil Service. While it is arguable whether the civil service exam is truly the best way to recruit competent officials, it at least provided an equal opportunity to all qualified candidates who would have otherwise found it impossible to compete for available positions in the Chinese civil service under the cadre system. In addition, the reform attempted to distinguish the civil service from the CCP; for instance, the 1993 reform limited “state civil servants” to the personnel in administrative organizations who had power and conducted public service (Chan & Li, 2007). As it did not explicitly include the Communist Party members, there was much room to regard civil service as an independent entity from the CCP.

However, the transition toward civil service in China is far from complete. While the civil service system was introduced in 1993, the countrywide exam only began in 1997 after conducting pilot experiments at central and provincial government levels.² Moreover, the level of fairness in civil service exams is highly questionable; cheating is frequently reported.³ More recently, even the separation of civil service from CCP is challenged: For instance, the Civil Service Law of the People’s Republic of China that firstly enacted in 2005 reinforces the CCP’s control over the civil service—The law allows the CCP to appoint and dismiss the elected and unelected civil servants, much unlike civil service systems in other countries. This law thus calls into question the level of accountability of civil servants given that in such an environment, their loyalties appear to be inclined toward the CCP officials’ interests rather than those of the public (Chan & Li, 2007). Therefore, we can conclude that the Chinese civil service’s transition to a meritocratic system is still incomplete.

Not surprisingly, the Chinese civil service thus faces many challenges. Internally, it suffers from low motivation of its civil servants. An (2007) argues that the Chinese civil service underestimates the importance of job motivation and individuals’ differences, and thus contributes to the low morale and efficiency of Chinese civil servants. Similarly, Hu (2006) criticizes the absence of an effective motivation system that

ironically wastes what little talent is available. Lin (2007) thus articulates his concern that the Chinese civil service suffers from the most severe job-burnout problem as compared with other vocations in China.

Accordingly, Chinese scholars have proposed many prescriptions for these problems. For instance, Lin (2007) criticizes the egalitarian personnel management and calls for the establishment of an extrinsic rewards system. Hu (2006) and An (2007) demand a better job performance evaluation system that can be used to make decisions regarding performance-linked remuneration and promotions. Yet, these prescriptions calling for the establishment of a better extrinsic rewards system cannot resolve the more serious malady of the Chinese civil service—the decline of public service spirit.

The Chinese civil service faces a severe deficit of “public” service spirit. More than 35% of Chinese business executives surveyed believe that the level of integrity of local officials is “bad” or “very bad” (Pei, 2007). Xie, Zheng, and Yan (2008) surveyed 1,020 individuals including civil servants and the general public in Beijing and Yantai, and examined the moral development of China’s civil servants. Civil servants rated their level of morality as 7.63 out of 10 in contrast to the general public’s rating of 5.66, which showed that the public are more serious to the low morality of civil servants. A lack of ethics among public officials who indulge in extravagance and waste, gambling and vices, results in the illegal use of public property and abuse of public power. Such decay in morality, thoughts, and lifestyle is believed to be the birthplace of corruption (Tian, 1995). In 2007, 1.3 million corruption cases were reported to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CCP. However, out of these, only 10% are investigated (accounting for about 1.1% of total public officials) while only 1.91 out of 1,000 public officials were prosecuted in 2006. Despite this low prosecution rate, this rate is 38.8 times larger than that of the United States where, as of 2006, around 1,000 government employees were convicted (The U.S. Department of Justice, 2006) out of 20.3 million government employees at all levels (Berkley & Rouse, 2004).

Besides the ethical and low moral problem, the Chinese personnel management system has been criticized as being highly influenced by the traditional feudalism, such as *guanbenwei* (bureaucrats orientation or bureaucratic centrality) and *guanli yitihua* (the integration of the official position and the benefits; Chen, 2006). Given the severe impact of the lack of ethics and the entrenchment of the civil service system in feudalistic roots, Lin’s prescription to establish an extrinsic rewards system appears still insufficient.

More ominously, this deficit of public service spirit has also “infected” the next generation of bureaucrats, specifically university students. Luo and Luo (2006) surveyed 1,800 university students and found that regardless of their regional differences, students were more concerned about their personal value actualization and less about public interests (Luo & Luo, 2006); similar results were replicated by other scholars (Z. Li & Zhang, 2007). While these studies did not distinguish job motivation of the public and private job seekers and, therefore, fell short of specifically measuring public job seekers’ job motivations, we can maintain that there is a substantial concern regarding the deficit of public service spirit of future public officials in China.

What exactly do we mean by public service spirit in China? In fact, “public service” spirit has more profound philosophical, political, and administrative implications in China. In Confucianism, “public” (公 *gong*) has four different connotations (Kim, 2008). First, it implies unselfishness and impartiality (无私 *wusi*), referring to an individual’s commitment to make judgment and behave according to universal, rather than “personal” interests; public (公 *gong*) also refers to fairness (公平 *gongping*). Second, Confucian Analects and other classical texts suggest that fairness (and impartiality) is a cardinal virtue of public officials who are required to apply universal standards in providing public service to all of society. Third, “the public” refers not simply to a mass, but rather to a community of persons sharing common interests. Finally, “public” is also interchangeably used to refer to “government position” (官职 *guan zhi*). All these four connotations of “public” imply that “public” represents universal rather than private (私 *si*) interests. Therefore, any public job should be ethically superior to private jobs.

This traditional Confucian understanding of “public” complements the political ideology of the CCP. During his reign, Mao Zedong had declared that “public” was a source of the CCP’s political power, and all his successors have emphasized that the CCP should represent the fundamental interests of the public (人民 *renmin*; for example, Deng Xiaoping’s three advantages [三个有利于 *sangeyouliyu*], Jiang Zemin’s three represents [三个代表 *sangedaibiao*], and Hu Jintao’s human-orientation [以人为本 *yirenweiben*]). While Chinese public administration is subordinated to the directions dictated by the CCP and is assumed to simply refer to the technical process of applying laws and implementing policies formulated by the CCP, the concept of “public interests” is very clearly a guiding principle of the entire administrative process and is theoretically politically supported. Surprisingly, despite this tradition emphasizing “publicness” of public job, Chinese public administration literature rarely analyzes whether public service spirit can explain the job choice of future civil servants.

PSM and Civil Servants

Aforementioned problems of the Chinese civil service are not unique to China. In the United States, the importance of PSM was recognized after the widespread and prevalent bureaucratic bashing in the 1970s to 1980s. When the Volker Commission of 1988 observed that bureaucrats who had been subjected to severe bureaucratic bashing since the 1970s experienced low morale and high job turnover rates, job motivation and satisfaction became important issues in personnel management in a bid to increase managerial efficiency. Similarly, Robert Behn argues that the question of “how public managers can motivate anyone in public sector” is of critical significance in public management (Behn, 1995). Some studies also argue that PSM could lead to high levels of job satisfaction, which is positively related to enhanced organization productivity, strong organizational commitment, increased customer satisfaction, long-term organization success, and reduced absenteeism (Jurkiewicz, Massey, & Brown, 1998; Naff & Crum, 1999; Romzek, 1990).

Yet, the importance of PSM should not be limited to improving managerial efficiency. A more important contribution of PSM to public administration research is to spur a reevaluation of what fundamental values should form the basis of public service: in this case, serving public interests. During the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of the strong trend of the New Public Management (NPM) referring to marketization, privatization, and public-private partnership in public organizations (Barzelay, 2001; Kettl, 2002; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), many public value issues were replaced with managerial efficiency (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). In contrast to NPM's emphasis on managerial efficiency, PSM theory posits that public service spirit is an important facilitator in constructing public trust toward government and building social capital (Brewer, Selden, & Facer, 2000). Public employees with a high level of PSM are more likely to attend to civic affairs (Brewer, 2003) and prefer participatory, over authoritative, policy making. These activities, in fact, are crucial for constructing and retaining social capital in society. Technocrats seeking only managerial efficiency without demonstrating any public service spirit cannot actively engage in interactions between public service and civil society. Given these reasons, public service spirit has been regarded as one of the distinctive factors characterizing the public sector.

The motivational difference between the public and private sector is well reflected in the widely used PSM definition proposed by Perry and Wise (1990). According to their definition, PSM refers to "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded *primarily* or *uniquely* in public institutions and organizations" (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368). It must be acknowledged though, as Michael Murray (1975) had emphasized, that public service spirit could also simply be a special issue of general motivation study in organizational behavior (OB). Similarly, Gabris and Simo (1995) also maintain that motivation to serve general community is not monopolized by any particular sector. However, in contrast to both Murray, and Gabris and Simo's findings, the public/private sector difference in China is significant enough to warrant isolating and studying public service spirit of civil service officers. The vestige of a cadre system, the strong political leadership of the CCP, and the interlocking features of politics and administration in China make Chinese public administration inseparable from politics. Public servants are asked to preserve high levels of ethical standards by the CCP Disciplinary Punishment Regulations and Administrative Punishment Regulations (*Xingzheng Jiguan Gongwuyuan Chufen Tiaoli*). In addition, they are generally expected to behave as an exemplar of the ordinary people in the Confucian tradition. Simply put, the CCP asks civil servants for both their loyalty to the party itself (political affiliations) as well as to the public (civil affiliations), which complicates the direction of PSM and places the civil servant in a dilemma. Therefore, in the context of the Chinese public service, it is not unrealistic to assume that Chinese public sector employees would have different motivations as compared with private employees.

If public/private employees are different, what are the motivational differences among them? While empirical studies reflect different results as shown in Table 1, most empirical research suggests that public sector employees regard "opportunity to benefit society" as more important, as opposed to private sector employees. In

Table 1. Relative Importance of Motivators in Public and Private Sector.

Motivators	Public > private	Public < private	No difference
Social status and prestige	Maidani, 1991	Jurkiewicz, Massey, & Brown, 1998; Lyons, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2006; Rainey, 1982; Wittmer, 1991	Newstrom, Reif, & Monczka, 1976
Job security	Bellante & Link, 1981; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998; Schuster, 1974	Houston, 2000; Khojasteh, 1993; Newstrom et al., 1976; Wittmer, 1991	Frank & Lewis, 2004; Gabris & Simo, 1995; Karl & Sutton, 1998; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Lyons et al., 2006; Rainey, 1982; Rawls, Ullrich, & Nelson, 1975
High salary	Maidani, 1991	Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007; Cacioppe & Moke, 1984; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998; Karl & Sutton, 1998; Khojasteh, 1993; Kilpatrick, Cummings, & Jennings, 1964; Lawler, 1971; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Moon, 2000; Newstrom et al., 1976; Rainey, 1982; Rawls et al., 1975; Solomon, 1986; Wittmer, 1991	Crewson, 1997; Gabris & Simo, 1995; Lyons et al., 2006; Maidani, 1991; Schuster, 1974
Opportunities to benefit society	Buchanan, 1975; Cacioppe & Moke, 1984; Crewson, 1997; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Houston, 2000; Karl & Sutton, 1998; Kilpatrick et al., 1964; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Lyons et al., 2006; Rainey, 1982; Wittmer, 1991	Jurkiewicz et al., 1998	Gabris & Simo, 1995
Chances for promotion	Khojasteh, 1993	Crewson, 1997; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998	Gabris & Simo, 1995; Houston, 2000; Karl & Sutton, 1998; Wittmer, 1991
Friendly coworkers	Jurkiewicz et al., 1998		Khojasteh, 1993; Lyons et al., 2006; Wittmer, 1991

contrast, high salary is reported as a distinguishing motivator in the private sector. Another noticeable motivator distinguishing the public and private job employees is “social status and prestige.” As shown in Table 1, “social status and prestige” is a less important motivator to public than private employees. Given the social milieu emphasizing the entrepreneurship and the popularity of private sector jobs in the United States, people consider private sector jobs as prestigious. On the contrary, it has been argued that public jobs in China are more prestigious than private ones because of a Confucian tradition as we discussed in the previous section. Compared with the substantial number of empirical studies on PSM in the U.S. context, few empirical studies are available in China. Therefore, motivational differences among public/private job seekers are rarely considered in developing the public personnel management system of China.

Research Hypotheses

This article analyzes the differences of Chinese university students’ job motivation of public and private sector job seekers and examines the level of public spirit of public sector job seekers in China. As little research has been conducted on the Chinese university students’ attitudes toward the civil service, we test three hypotheses (Hypotheses 1 to 3) on the impact of motivators on sectoral job choice and two hypotheses (Hypotheses 4 and 5) on the impact of demographic variables (the gender and family influence) on sectoral job choice.⁴

Hypothesis 1: University students with high public service spirit are more likely to pursue public sector career.

PSM theory assumes that students highly motivated by public service spirit will naturally be inclined toward public sector jobs upon graduation (Lyons, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2006; Perry & Wise, 1990). The assumption is well described in the proposition that “the greater an individual’s public service motivation, the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization” (Perry & Wise, 1990). As this self-selection of public jobs driven by public service spirit is considered de facto, university students’ PSM appears to be less thoroughly studied in PSM theory. Instead, as shown in Table 1, most empirical studies focus on job motivation of incumbent public employees, proving that public sector employees possess a higher level of public service spirit as opposed to private employees. Therefore, the self-selection hypothesis needs to be empirically tested.

Hypothesis 2: “High prestige and social status” is a more important motivator to public than private job seekers.

As discussed on the concept of “public” (公gong), public sector jobs were respected as prestigious ones in the Confucian tradition; an appointment as a public official

brought honor to both the official's family and himself. Rather than tangible rewards such as political and/or economic power, the prestige and high social status of the public officials are more of an ethical and intrinsic nature.

China's economic liberalization and growth, however, gave rise to different aspects of attractiveness of public sector jobs. For instance, the privatization of state-owned enterprises and real-estate development in the 1990s allowed public officials to enjoy considerable discretionary power since they could then decide who would own them. The incremental socioeconomic changes implemented under the strong CCP leadership resulted in an increase of a substantial number of social and economic regulations, which gave bureaucrats more opportunities to wield their discretion and power. The economic development also increased the sheer size of government consumption. The Chinese government's consumption accounts for around 26.7% of China's total consumption, and 53.4% of total gross investment is made by government enterprises; these figures are substantially large when compared with similar consumption and investment patterns in the United States (18.3% and 6.6% each; Gwartney & Lawson, 2007). The large resource of government reinforces the prestige and power of public officials. In this context, it can be expected that Chinese university students would be inclined to choose public sector jobs because of the "high prestige and social status" it accords them.

However, contrary to the typical positive images of public jobs, Chinese university students may also hesitate to pursue a civil service career due to negative factors such as the rapid growth of private and multinational companies, which offer far better salaries and opportunities of advancement, negative images of public jobs due to corruption, and the corresponding declining trust in government. In light of these, Chinese university students may not perceive public sector jobs to be as honorable as previously mentioned. On the flipside, as shown in empirical studies in Table 1, "high prestige and social status" can be a more important motivator to university students seeking private sector careers instead.

Hypothesis 3: Job stability is a more important motivator to public than private job seekers.

In general, many countries endow life tenure to public employees, which characterizes job security of the public sector, and China is no exception. Officially, lifetime tenure does not exist anymore in China as it was not guaranteed by the 2005 Civil Service Law. Consequently, Chinese civil servants are under the risk of dismissal should they receive poor annual performance evaluation results. However, in reality, very few civil servants are ever dismissed on grounds of poor performance. Given this implicit life tenure system, the public sector jobs are regarded as "iron rice bowl" (铁饭碗 *tiefanwan*), which refers to an occupation with guaranteed job security with steady income and benefits. The iron rice bowl also implies a relatively comfortable work environment with little job stress; this sometimes allows employees to shirk their duties given the lack of performance-linked evaluations. The iron rice bowl issue was

very serious during the Communist regime, and many Chinese still believe that public sector jobs have a more stable and comfortable work environment than private sector jobs.

However, in contrast to this explanation, the stable and comfortable work environment might not be a motivator unique to public sector job seekers. Many empirical studies conducted on Western contexts, as shown in Table 1, report that there is no difference between job seekers of either sector with regard to job security. This implies that job security and a comfortable work environment are a general motivator, rather than a public sector-specific one.

Hypothesis 4: Female students are more likely to choose public jobs than are male students.

Public job choice cannot be solely explained by an individual motivational factor. Some contextual variables such as gender and family background must also be accounted for. In China, the Labor Law protects women from discrimination, and they are supposed to be entitled to equal legal rights and opportunities in the job market. In reality, however, gender discrimination in the Chinese job market is still prevalent. Jing (2007), citing statistics from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, argues that about 67% of employers still have explicit and implicit discriminative practices in the management of female workers. H. Li and Zhang (2006) state that more than 70% of their respondents believe that, all else being equal, employers will still give priority to male job applicants. The glass ceiling in promotion/career advancement, pay, and regional postings is also common in China. While the gender inequality problem is prevalent in both the private and public sector, China is experiencing some difficulty monitoring and enforcing the Labor Law, especially in the private sector. In contrast, as the public sector is expected to uphold the nondiscrimination clauses stipulated by the Labor Law, it provides relatively better protection to female employees. Hence, we expect female students to prefer to choose public sector jobs as gender discrimination in the public sector would then be less rampant than in the private sector. These explanations assume that gender has a direct influence on the sectoral job choice given the widespread occurrence of gender discrimination in China.

Another possible explanation is that female workers are highly motivated by public service spirit, thereby preferring public jobs. Research shows that women are more ethical (White, 1999) and attracted to policy making (DeHart-Davis, Marlowe, & Pandey, 2006) and meaningful work (Houston, 2000). In contrast, other studies report that female students have a lower preference for public sector jobs (Frederickson, 1967), and score lower on public interest and self-sacrifice than do male students (Perry, 1997). These contrasting explanations both assume that the impact of gender on sectoral job choice is intermediated by ethics or PSM. In this article, we test both direct and indirect influence of gender on sectoral job choice.

Hypothesis 5: University students whose family members work in government are more likely to choose public jobs.

Family influence is yet another variable that needs to be accounted for. In light of the strong tradition of familism in China, individuals are socialized through the strong influence of family; they frequently place family interests above and over individual interests. However, the direction of family influence on the public job choice is ambiguous and context-specific. If incumbent public officials are satisfied with their job, they will recommend their children or family members to seek a career in the public service. Moreover, given that *guanxi* (social connection or network) is a significant factor that can account for successful recruitment and promotion in China, university students whose family members are employed by the government might have a better chance to pass the civil service exam consisting of both a written test and an interview. Hence, we expect that university students whose family members are employed by the government would be more likely to choose public sector careers. However, this is applicable only in circumstances when their family members' public sector career experiences are positive; those with negative experiences or who are aware of negative aspects of the Chinese public service would be expected to discourage university students from pursuing a public sector career. In such cases, the family thus plays a significant role by allowing university students to make informed choices about the actual work environments in the Chinese public service.

Research Design and Methods

Variables

A dependent variable of this research is a sectoral job choice: choosing a public or private sector job. Yet, the meaning of a sector is highly controversial. For instance, it is unclear whether the following jobs should be categorized as public sector jobs or not: state-owned enterprises, education, postal service, and health organizations. The nonprofit sector complicates the issue further; while nonprofit sectors are long-standing institutions in developed countries, the very idea of the nonprofit sector is new in China. Given this ambiguity, we asked whether students preferred to work for the Chinese government (政府), private companies (私企), or "others" (其它); the inclusion of the "others" category gave the student respondents an opportunity not to choose the "government" or "private companies" options should they be uncertain about the sectors that they want to work for at the time of the survey.

Job motivators are major independent variables of a sectoral job choice; however, their selection and operationalization are debatable. Before PSM was actively discussed in the early 1990s, motivation theory had been extensively studied in OB. Scholars of motivation theory in OB proposed a substantial number of motivators and different operationalization approaches.⁵ In public administration, the PSM measure proposed by Perry (1997) is widely used. Perry proposed four unique PSM dimensions—(a) attraction to public policy making, (b) commitment to the public interest, (c) compassion, and (d) self-sacrifice—along with 35 question items. However, all the 35 motivators are not included in this survey as the goal of this article is not to measure the level of PSM; including all of Perry's question items would unduly reduce the

importance of other general job motivators such as salary and promotion. Review of literature in Appendix A also reveals that empirical studies measure job motivation with different motivators. For instance, Crewson (1997) propose intrinsic and extrinsic classification (Crewson, 1997), while Lyons et al. (2006) classify job motivators according to five different values: extrinsic, intrinsic, altruistic, prestige, and social work values (Lyons et al., 2006). Other studies do not classify motivators but use a list of job motivators instead (Cacioppe & Moke, 1984; Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998; Rainey, 1982). From the review of motivators shown in Appendix A, we can identify the most frequently used motivators in empirical studies, which include job security, high salary, promotion, chance to benefit the society, job significance, friendly coworkers, and high social status and prestige. These motivators are all included in Jurkiewicz et al.'s (1998) survey instrument; significantly, Jurkiewicz's instrument was used to compare private and public employees' job motivations, which is relevant to this study. Accordingly, we use 15 motivators used in Jurkiewicz et al. for this article.

In addition to 15 motivators, we add another factor, "gray income" (灰色收入 *huise shouru*), to the survey instrument. Because of prevalent corruption, the expectation of receipt of gray income is allegedly a significant motivator as it compensates the low salaries of Chinese public officials. Finally, respondents are asked to rank these 16 motivators from the 1st to 16th (in ascending order, "1" being the most important and "16" being the least).

Sectoral job choice is also affected by other control variables: the degree of negative perception to civil service (corruption, fairness of civil service exam), years of education, and university.

The negative perception of civil service due to corruption and fairness of civil service exam can affect the university students' preference for a public sector job. As of 1996, the Chinese government adopted the national civil service exam as a selection standard to recruit employees. However, the exam has been criticized by both the general public and some scholars in public administration due to its unscientific content and the issue of meritocracy, especially when the results of the interview processes are influenced by *guanxi* (personal connection) rather than by the merit of candidates. Corruption is another variable affecting the negative perception of civil service. The high levels of corruption has impaired public trust toward the government and reduced the competitiveness of government jobs, subsequently leading to lower public trust. Although further studies should be undertaken to analyze the causal relationship between the level of trust in government and university students' choice of public sector job choice, we control for the perception of fairness of the civil service exam and corruption of government to avoid an omission bias.

The number of years of education potential civil servants have undergone is also controlled for in our model. Perry (1997) suggests that school education can be enhanced to facilitate the development of PSM. Similarly, Houston (2000) argues that individuals who have attained higher education attach greater weight to "meaningfulness" of work rather than "high salary" and "job security."

Finally, as individuals' responses are nested within each university and the variations between the universities are not negligible, we control for the university by assuming random coefficients of university dummies by using a two-level random effect model.

Sampling and Data Collection

To examine Chinese university students' job motivation, we surveyed students of four major universities—Peking, Renmin, Nankai, and Fudan. These universities were selected for this study given that they are prestigious universities that ranked in the list of 14 first-class universities in China⁶ and have very strong political science departments. Compared with students of other departments, students of the political science department tend to have a better understanding of the public as well as private sector jobs, and are typically the category of university students who seek public sector jobs. Therefore, students of the political science departments were taken as the primary target population for a sampling and comprised 88.05% of the total respondents.

We performed a pilot test to assess the measurement error. Since our original survey instrument of Jurkiewicz et al. (1998) was written in English, we had to translate motivators into the Chinese language, which could have caused measurement errors given that the translated motivator might be understood differently when compared with the motivator originally written in English. In addition, ranking 16 motivators can cause psychological responsive inconsistency in the individual respondents, which is the other major source of measurement errors. To assuage the seriousness of these measurement error problems, we prepared English and Chinese language versions of the survey instruments and performed reliability tests on 35 students who are effectively bilingual in both Chinese and English to test-read both the Chinese and English language questionnaires. More than 77% of their responses showed Spearman rank correlations larger than .5 and an overall Spearman correlation of .66 with 95% confidence intervals of (0.61~0.70). This reliability test suggests that while there is some level of measurement error due to translation, and responsive inconsistency of humans exists, the magnitude of the measurement error is not acute.

Finally, 450 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to students in these four universities in September 2008 (150 copies were distributed to Nankai University, and the remaining universities were allocated 100 copies each). Of these, 401 copies (89.11%) were returned to the surveyors, of which 329 copies were fully completed and usable.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the sample. Among 329 respondents, 51.1% indicated a preference for jobs in the Chinese government, reflecting the popularity of public sector jobs among Chinese students.⁷ While our sample is slightly biased toward male respondents (55.3% of samples are male), it was more a reflection of male dominance in Chinese university education, rather than of biased sampling.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of a Sample.

	Private	Public	Others	Total
University				
Fudan	41	23	11	75
Nankai	30	73	14	117
Peking	34	34	7	75
Renmin	17	38	7	62
Gender				
Female	61	68	18	147
Male	61	100	21	182
Any family members in government				
No	84	118	30	232
Yes	38	50	9	97
Years of education				
4	26	34	14	74
3	43	43	11	97
2	45	75	13	133
1	8	16	1	25
Total	122	168	39	329

Analysis Results

As PSM theory has claimed, our analysis results show that public service spirit (measured by a motivator, “chance to benefit society”) is a very important motivator to public job seekers who ranked it as second; this is distinct from private job seekers who ranked it as seventh. However, explicit motivators such as high salary, job security, and prestige and social status are still also important to public sector job seekers.

Descriptive Analysis

To demonstrate the strength of preference to motivators, we reversed the original ranks. For instance, if a respondent ranks “a stable and secure future” as the first, the rescaled value is 16.

Table 3 shows the average rank orders of each motivator by sector. A Pearson correlation of average rankings of the two groups is .92 ($p < .01$), which is significantly high considering the small degree of freedom ($df = 15$). This suggests the similarity in rankings of motivators between the public and private job seekers. Along with the overall similarity of rankings, both public and private job seekers commonly rank four out of the five most important motivators: (a) stable and secure future, (b) chance to exercise leadership, (c) high prestige and social status, and (d) high salary.

Table 3. A Comparison of Rank Order of Job Motivation by Sectors.

	Private sector (n = 122)		Public sector (n = 168)		Others (n = 39)	
	M	SE	M	SE	M	SE
A stable and promising future	13.21 (1)	0.34	13.01 (1)	0.27	11.28 (2)	0.77
A chance to learn new things	9.57 (4)	0.36	9.35 (6)	0.33	8.8 (6)	0.71
A chance to benefit society**	8.6 (7)	0.42	10.44 (2)	0.34	8.49 (8)	0.74
A chance to exercise leadership	9.25 (5)	0.35	9.9 (5)	0.33	8.54 (7)	0.72
To work as part of a team	8.38 (9)	0.33	8.07 (10)	0.28	7.74 (12)	0.64
A variety in work assignments	7.53 (12)	0.36	7.84 (11)	0.29	6.23 (15)	0.66
High prestige and social status	9.75 (3)	0.40	10.29 (3)	0.34	9.39 (3)	0.77
Friendly and congenial associates	8.11 (11)	0.35	8.39 (9)	0.30	8.44 (9)	0.71
An ability to earn high salary**	11.58 (2)	0.41	10.01 (4)	0.37	12.13 (1)	0.66
An ability to earn gray income	6.83 (13)	0.47	5.91 (15)	0.37	7.31 (14)	0.86
A chance to use my special abilities	8.85 (6)	0.39	8.46 (8)	0.35	8.9 (5)	0.60
A chance to make a contribution to important decisions	8.31 (10)	0.37	8.77 (7)	0.34	9.33 (4)	0.62
Freedom from supervision	4.74 (16)	0.37	4.65 (16)	0.27	5.95 (16)	0.67

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

	Private sector (n = 122)		Public sector (n = 168)		Others (n = 39)	
	M	SE	M	SE	M	SE
A chance to engage in satisfying leisure activities	6.83 (13)	0.38	6.37 (14)	0.28	7.62 (13)	0.64
Freedom from pressures to conform to, both on and off the job	6.07 (15)	0.36	6.75 (13)	0.33	7.8 (11)	0.74
Opportunity for career advancement	8.39 (8)	0.40	7.81 (12)	0.34	8.08 (10)	0.75

Note: Values in bold are the top five ranked motivators of each sector. Numbers in parentheses are ranks of motivators of each group. Pearson correlation between public and private sector = .92 ($p < .05$), private and others = .89 ($p < .05$), and public and others = .78 ($p < .05$).

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$.

Although further hypothesis tests after controlling for other variables are necessary, as shown in the following sections, information derived from the simple ranking shown in Table 3 suggests that “chance to benefit society” is truly a distinguishable motivator to public sector job seekers. In contrast, high salary is a more important motivator to private than public sector job seekers, although this conclusion is not supported when other variables are controlled in a multivariate analysis. As such, the high rankings of “salary” by private sector job seekers should be cautiously interpreted. This topic will be revisited in the upcoming section on “Interpretations” of results. Nonetheless, the data also do not indicate that high salary is negligible to public sector job seekers either, given that it is among the top-ranking motivators.

Finally, unlike Hypothesis 3 referring to the “iron rice bowl” problem in the public sector, “job stability and promising future” is commonly important to both public and private sector job seekers. This indicates that job security in the Chinese private sector is also not as bad, as when compared with the public sector, as was earlier expected. This might be so, given the strong protection of workers stemming from the entrenched socialistic vestige in China.

Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis for Hypothesis Tests

To test the hypotheses on the determinants of university students’ job choice, we construct multiple logistic regression models of sectoral job choice. One problem arising

in model specification is the linear dependence among 16 motivators because they are ranked from 1st to 16th. To avoid the linear dependence, we exclude the gray income, which turned out one of the least important and theoretically weak motivators. To test the sensitivity of analysis results according to model specification, we construct three different linear models shown in Table 4. All three models assume the random effect of the various universities to model the heterogeneous variation among universities.

Another problem is multicollinearity. As we use 16 motivators, these motivators might be correlated with each other. Although few methods are known for the formal multicollinearity test of logistic regression, our diagnostics using variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance test acquired from ordinary least square (OLS) estimation did not indicate significant multicollinearity. Nonetheless, some motivators are correlated to each other as shown in the correlation coefficient matrix in Appendix B. Therefore, due caution should be exercised in the interpretation of standard errors of estimates.

Hypothesis 1 assumes that university students who possess a higher level of public service spirit prefer to choose public sector jobs. From Table 4, the coefficients of “chance to benefit society” are significant in all three models. If we interpret the coefficient of full model (Model 3), an additional unit increase of the ranking of “chance to benefit society” will increase the relative probability of choosing a public sector job over a private sector job by approximately 12.9%. Summing up the descriptive analysis in Table 3 and this multiple logistic regression analysis in Table 4, we cannot reject Hypothesis 1, and the data thus support the self-selection proposition that “the greater an individual’s public service motivation, the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization” (Perry & Wise, 1990).

Hypothesis 2 predicts that public sector job seekers highly value “high prestige and social status” given the strong power of government and the Chinese tradition that posits bureaucrats as elites and rulers. In Table 3, both private and public job seekers rank “high prestige and social status” as important motivators (9.75 and 10.29 each). After controlling for other variables, as shown in Table 4, “high prestige and social status” is statistically significant in explaining sectoral job choice at the 10% significant level. Reading the coefficient of Model 3, we can conclude that an additional unit increase of the ranking of “high prestige and social status” will increase the relative probability of choosing a public sector job over a private sector job by about 9.2%. Despite this statistical significance, it is noteworthy that even private sector job seekers believe that their jobs are prestigious.

The obsession with job stability described by the iron rice bowl (铁饭碗 *tiefanwan*) is assumed by Hypothesis 3. Our results show that university students are eager to choose jobs that have the potential to give rise to a “stable and promising future” and this is the most important motivator to public sector job seekers. However, there is no statistical evidence to support Hypothesis 3 in that this motivator is more crucial to public than to private sector job seekers.

Finally, we do not find any statistical evidence to suggest that the nonmotivational factors such as gender (Hypothesis 4) and family influence (Hypothesis 5) adequately explain sectoral job choices as coefficients are not statistically significant in both

Table 4. Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis Results (Dependent Variable = “Public Job Choice”).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Odds ratio
Intercept	-3.972 (3.57)	-3.752 (3.78)	-2.652 (3.94)	0.070
A stable and promising future	0.013 (0.04)	0.023 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	1.020
A chance to learn new things	-0.022 (0.04)	-0.033 (0.04)	-0.044 (0.05)	0.957
A chance to benefit society	0.133 (0.04)**	0.122 (0.04)**	0.121 (0.04)**	1.129
A chance to exercise leadership	0.067 (0.04)	0.052 (0.04)	0.042 (0.05)	1.043
To work as part of a team	-0.039 (0.05)	-0.041 (0.05)	-0.049 (0.05)	0.952
A variety in work assignments	0.069 (0.05)	0.061 (0.05)	0.058 (0.05)	1.060
High prestige and social status	0.073 (0.04)*	0.091 (0.05)**	0.088 (0.05)*	1.092
Friendly and congenial associates	0.063 (0.04)	0.074 (0.05)	0.065 (0.05)	1.067
An ability to earn high salary	-0.031 (0.04)	-0.043 (0.05)	-0.047 (0.05)	0.954
A chance to use my special abilities	0.004 (0.04)	0.014 (0.04)	0.012 (0.04)	1.012
A chance to make a contribution to important decisions	0.046 (0.04)	0.039 (0.04)	0.031 (0.05)	1.031
Freedom from supervision	-0.002 (0.05)	0.008 (0.05)	-0.002 (0.05)	0.998
A chance to engage in satisfying leisure activities	-0.003 (0.04)	-0.006 (0.05)	0 (0.05)	1.000
Freedom from pressures to conform both on and off the job	0.108 (0.04)**	0.112 (0.04)**	0.119 (0.05)**	1.126
Opportunity for career advancement	0.026 (0.04)	0.052 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	1.052
Female		-0.219 (0.29)	-0.362 (0.3)	0.696
Family working for government		-0.062 (0.3)	-0.219 (0.31)	0.803
Year 2005			1.005 (0.67)	2.731
Year 2006			-0.361 (0.56)	0.697
Year 2007			-0.066 (0.54)	0.937
Year 2008			0	1.000

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Odds ratio
Fairness of exam (1 = yes)			-0.236 (0.35)	0.790
Corruption (1 = yes)			-0.411 (0.29)	0.663
University		Suppressed		
Scaled R^2 (%)	14.9	24.13	27.67	
Model fit chi-square (p value)	33.9 (.004)	57.34 (<.001)	66.80 (<.001)	

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors of regression coefficients. Odds ratios reported are those of Model 3.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$.

Models 2 and 3. Also other control variables such as corruption and fairness of civil service exams are not significant in explaining university students' sectoral job choice.

Interpretations

Our analysis results indicate that a stable and promising future, chance to exercise leadership, chance to benefit society, high prestige and social status, and high salary are the most important motivators to public sector job seekers. In particular, "a chance to benefit society" has been empirically supported as a primarily important motivator in explaining Chinese university students' sectoral job choice in this article as well as in Perry and Wise's (1990) study. Notably, the sectoral difference in the level of public service spirit is more conspicuous among female students. As shown in two panels of Figure 1, female students ($0 = \text{gender}$) who aspire to positions in the public sector rank public service spirit as higher than do female private sector job seekers (10.1 vs. 7.6), while the sectoral differences on the level of public service spirit is weakly observed among male students (10.7 vs. 9.6). In the context of this study, this suggests that gender is also an explanatory variable of the level of public service spirit.

However, statistical models shown in Table 4 show that the gender does not affect the sectoral job choice after controlling for other variables. If we sum up these causal relationships among gender, public service spirit, and sectoral job choice, we can conclude that public service spirit is an intervening variable between gender and sectoral job choice (Figure 2).

The ranks of "high salary" should be carefully interpreted. High salary is an important motivator to both private and public sector job seekers. In general, given the emphasis on intrinsic motivators in the public sector, we might conclude that extrinsic motivators such as job security and salary (Crewson, 1997) are not important to public sector job seekers. Yet, as shown in Table 3, high salary is still one of the top five motivators to both private and public sector job seekers (average rankings are 11.58

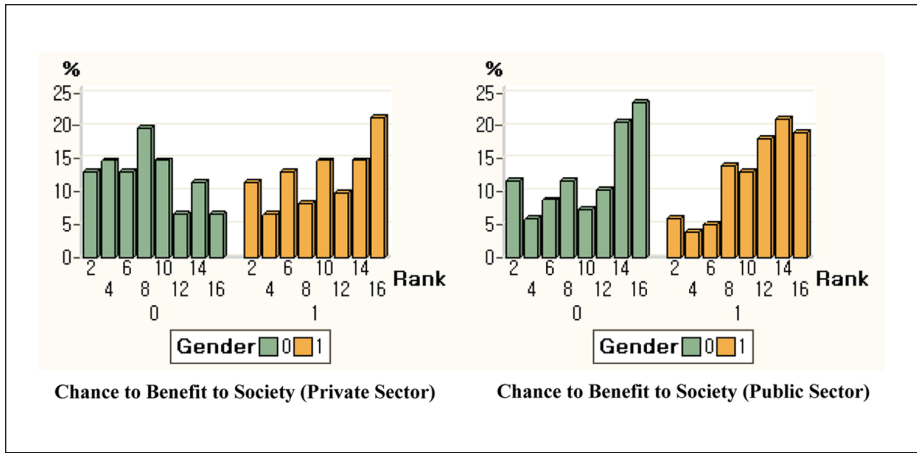


Figure 1. Different ranks of public service spirit by gender and sectoral choice.

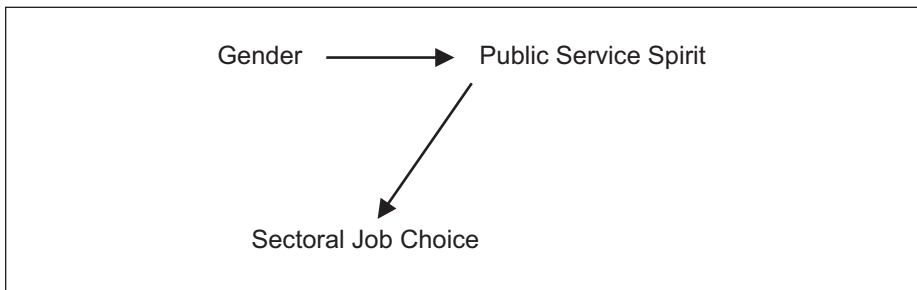


Figure 2. Mediating role of public service spirit.

and 10.01 each). From Figure 3, it is also revealed that female students regard “high salary” as a highly important motivator regardless of their sectoral job choice.

One problem in interpretation of the results is that sectoral difference of the importance of salary produces different results in the descriptive (significant salary difference) and multivariable model (no difference). As shown in the multiple logistic regression analysis results of Table 4, high salary is not a statistically significant variable in all three models. On the contrary, the univariate *t*-test shown in Table 3 concludes that the mean difference of rankings of high salary between public and private sector job seekers is statistically significant. What causes this inconsistency between univariate and multivariate analysis results?

One possible explanation for this discrepancy is omission bias. As the univariate analysis does not control for other variables, the estimated difference would be biased. If omission bias is indeed the cause for the inconsistencies, then the inclusion of other control variables should reduce the statistical significance of the univariate test.

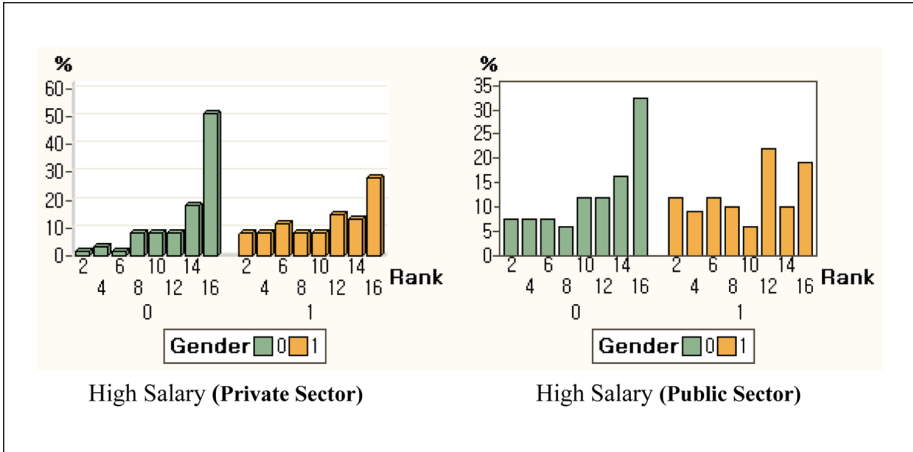


Figure 3. Different ranks of “high salary” by gender and sectoral choice.

However, when we run logistic regression on “high salary” and other control variables, the hypothesis that high salary is a more important motivator for private than public sector job seekers is still statistically significant, and the coefficient does not change much; this suggests that omission bias may not be as severe as initially expected. An alternative explanation thus may be the collinearity between public service spirit and high salary motivators as, theoretically, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators are assumed to be negatively correlated. In fact, our data indicate that “high salary” and “chance to benefit society” are negatively correlated ($-0.31, p \text{ value} < .05$) as shown in Appendix B. Given the negative correlation between public service spirit and high salary, the standard error of the coefficient of high salary of Model 3 is 10% larger than that of the model that excludes public service spirit. As a result, the exclusion of public service spirit from Model 3 transforms the coefficient of “high salary” into a significant motivator. Therefore, while further studies using a larger sample should be done to acquire a more consistent estimate,⁸ we are currently able to conclude that “high salary” is a significant variable in explaining sectoral job choice or that private sector job seekers rank “high salary” higher than the public sector job seekers.

The higher rank of “high salary” indicated by private sector job seekers (as opposed to public job seekers) contributes to our understanding of Chinese university students’ perception of public sector salary scales. Whereas some scholars including those we interviewed in Beijing claim that public sector positions guarantee a higher salary given various fringe benefits,⁹ our survey results suggest that university students believe that the private sector jobs pay better salaries than those in the public sector. This survey result is consistent with our interviews of Chinese students.

The interpretation of “high prestige and social status” requires special attention. Descriptive and multivariate analyses results suggest that “high prestige and social status” is an important motivator to both private and public sector job seekers (9.75 and 10.29, respectively), and an additional unit increase of the ranking of “high

prestige and social status” increases the relative probability of choosing a public sector job over a private sector job by approximately 9.2%. However, is the motivator “prestige and social status” purely related to power and social recognition as we have assumed?

According to the traditional Confucian tradition, the prestige and social status of public officials stems from the ethical integrity of their behavior, which elicits respect from society. Contrary to this ethical interpretation rooted in Confucian tradition, our analysis reveals that prestige and high social status essentially implies the “power to rule” instead. Upon examination of the correlation matrix in Appendix B, we find that “prestige and high social status” is negatively correlated with PSM (-.21), and positively related to “high salary” (.19) and “gray income” (.15). This implies that Chinese university students have materialistic rather than ethical understanding of prestige. In addition, students who seek jobs that are able to bestow them with “high prestige and social status” choose public sector jobs notwithstanding the fact that they hold negative views of the Chinese government. For instance, among public sector job seekers, students who believe that government is corrupt and/or believe that the civil service exam is unfair rank “prestige and high social status” as higher (10.91:9.97~11.84) than those who believe otherwise, that the Chinese government is clean and that the civil service exams are fair (9.1:6.52~11.67). In other words, notwithstanding their acknowledgment of the impaired integrity of public sector jobs, university students believe that public sector jobs will provide them with the relevant opportunities to gain prestige and high social status in the materialistic context. This finding is significant, and further studies should be undertaken to examine Chinese university students’ attitudes toward power, prestige, and social status. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study, we can conclude that “prestige and social status” is related to explicit motivators rather than implicit and ethical motivators.

Finally, although our analysis reveals that family influence on the sectoral job choice (Hypothesis 5) is not statistically significant, the analysis result suggests that family members do affect university students’ perception of the government to some extent; 52.2% of students whose family members work for the government responded that the government is corrupt, while this figure increases to 63.9% if they do not have any family member working for the Chinese government.

Conclusion

This article attempts to examine the job motivations of Chinese university students with five hypotheses. The research findings suggest that “chance to benefit society” used as a proxy of public service spirit is a more important motivator to public than private sector job seekers, while high salary is more important to private sector job seekers but is also important to public sector job seekers. Reflecting the Chinese tradition that accords public officials with similar levels of respect as elites and rulers, public sector job seekers might rank “high prestige and social status” higher than private job seekers. However, the interpretation of “prestige” or “social status” in the Chinese context is more closely related to individual’s explicit achievement, rather than the ethical integrity to be experienced in a public sector job. We also find that

job stability is more of a general motivator rather than one that is specific to public sector job seekers. Finally, the data and analysis revealed that gender is an intervening variable that has indirect influence on the sectoral job choice through public service spirit.

These findings are, of course, not without caveats. First of all, this article is not free from the general criticisms of the survey method. While we selected students from four top Chinese universities, the sample population of 329 students may not be entirely representative, given that there are more than 25 million university students in China. As we sampled students from prestigious universities, caution is necessary in case of the generalization of our findings to other group of students. The potential threat of multicollinearity and psychological inconsistency of respondents in ranking 16 motivators is truly a limitation of this research.

To overcome the potential limitation of survey method, we conducted formal interviews with scholars and students, and other series of informal communication with others in China, which support our findings. Despite this effort, given the absence of precedent empirical studies, our findings have much room for falsification. Hence, the progress of our understanding of Chinese university students' job motivation is thus dependent on further studies and theory falsification with larger and more representative samples.

Second, as we discussed in the research design section, the use of "chance to benefit society" as a sufficient proxy of PSM is arguable. For instance, while Perry's (1997) PSM measure suggests four dimensions (attraction to public policy making, commitment to the public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice; Perry, 1997), our survey instruments only measure "chance to benefit society" and "chance to make a contribution to an important decision." The latter, however, turns out to be an insignificant motivator to both private and public job seekers in our analysis. Thus, in the context of this article, unlike Perry's approach to PSM, this study only uses one motivator, "chance to benefit society" to measure public service spirit.

With these caveats in mind, we can nonetheless assert that our examination of Chinese university students' job motivation has both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this article shifts the focus of PSM research from incumbent to future civil servants, that is, university students. Much of the current literature that focuses on incumbent public officials does not provide many managerial implications to increase the level of PSM in public organizations. This is primarily because human nature dictates that motivation structures are formed in childhood and adolescence, and are thus not easily altered to suit managerial purposes. Given this, it is imperative for public sector managers to recruit employees with an established and high level of PSM. Perry and Wise (1990) propose the self-selection hypothesis that assumed that individuals with high levels of PSM will be drawn to public organizations, but few empirical studies have tested this theory (Perry & Wise, 1990). This article validates the self-selection hypothesis, and these findings generate a new, challenging research question that can be applied to the future empirical studies:

Research Question 1: Is a higher PSM level observed among incumbent public than private sector employees as a result of the unique work environment of the public sector a result of self-selection of employees, or both?

While this article highlights the existence of self-selection effect, further studies should analyze how this initial PSM level of students changes during their career in public organizations.

The other contribution of this study is the implications for the Chinese public personnel management. The high popularity of civil service jobs in China results in lesser attention to topics of PSM and job motivations of future Chinese civil servants. However, with the rapid expansion of the private sector in light of China's continued growth and development, the Chinese Government will face more difficulty in recruiting competent students to the public sector, just as other developed countries have experienced. This difficulty is highly plausible considering the similar motivation structures of public and private sector job seekers, as our study reveals that four out of five most important motivators are mutually important to both public and private sector job seekers. If the private sector provides a higher salary and if entrepreneurs are more respected in a rapidly advancing society, it is likely and only natural that more talented students will gravitate toward private sector jobs. Therefore, this article recommends that the Chinese government carefully monitor job motivation patterns of future public officials and design recruitment processes accordingly to draw high PSM holders to public organizations.

Appendix A.

Major Job Motivators Used in Empirical Studies.

Scholars	General motivations
Buelens and Van den Broeck (2007)	Working hours, total commitment, motivation by salary, motivated by working in a supportive environment, motivation by self-development, motivation by responsibility, and work-family conflict.
Cacioppe and Mock (1984)	Interesting work, group cooperation, participation, develop individual, atmosphere, stress, quality of work group, M/L/S (manager/leader/supervisor) communication, expectations clear, near capability, creativity, frequency of meetings, M/L/S concern, environment, intergroup cooperation, involvement, meets efficiently, M/L/S technical ability, resources, plan to stay, integral part, efficiency, M/L/S awareness, function in society, and care about welfare.
Crewson (1997)	Intrinsic (service): feeling of accomplishment, worthwhile accomplishment, useful to society and helpful to others. Extrinsic (economic): job security, high pay, promotion, and performance awards.
Houston (2000)	High income, short working hours and much free time, no danger of being fired, chances for promotion, and work that is important and gives a feeling of accomplishment.

(continued)

Appendix A. (continued)

Scholars	General motivations
Jurkiewicz, Massey, and Brown (1998)	A stable and secure future, chance to benefit society, chance to learn new things, chance to engage in satisfying leisure activities, chance to exercise leadership, chance to use my special abilities, chance to make a contribution to important decision, freedom from supervision, freedom from pressure to conform both on and off the job, friendly and congenial associates, high prestige and social status, high salary, opportunity for advancement, variety in work assignments, and working as part of a team.
Lyons, Duxbury, and Higgins (2006)	<p>Extrinsic work values: salary, job security, and benefits.</p> <p>Intrinsic work values: intellectually stimulating work, challenging work, interesting work, continuous learning at work, creativity in work, and using one's abilities at work.</p> <p>Altruistic work values: work that makes a contribution to one's society, work that is consistent with one's moral values, and fairness in the application of policies and programs.</p> <p>Prestige work values: authority, prestigious work, influence, and opportunities for advancement.</p> <p>Social work values: friendly coworkers and a fun work environment.</p>
Rainey (1982)	Recognition from your organization, higher pay than you now make, a promotion, job security, respect and friendliness from your coworkers, a sense of worthwhile accomplishment, development of your abilities through your work, a good feeling about yourself as a result of your work, engaging in meaningful public service, making a good deal of money, doing work that is helpful to other people, making important decisions and exerting an important influence on your organization, and achieving status and prestige.
Taylor (2005)	<p>Organization: geographical location and high profile.</p> <p>Management: skilled management.</p> <p>Working conditions: flexible working hours.</p> <p>Economic rewards: opportunity for promotion, good job security, high salary, fair salary, high prestige and social status, and attractive fringe benefits.</p> <p>Internal rewards: opportunity for self-improvement and opportunity to benefit the wider community.</p>
Wittmer (1991)	Higher pay, being helpful to others, community service, status and prestige, coworker respect, coworker friendship, job security, and promotion.

Appendix B.

Correlation Matrix of 16 Job Motivators.

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16
A stable and secure future	1	.17**	.08	.07	-.03	-.12**	-.04	-.05	-.01	-.15**	-.03	-.15**	-.26**	-.24**	-.21**	.08
Chance to learn new things		1	.32**	.12**	.22**	.09	-.29**	-.05	-.27**	-.35**	.07	-.26**	-.19**	-.11*	-.16**	-.18**
Chance to benefit society			1	.16**	.25**	-.05	-.21**	-.04	-.37**	-.3**	.08	-.01	-.17**	-.18**	-.21**	-.3**
Chance to exercise leadership				1	.25**	.03	-.05	-.12**	-.17**	-.16**	-.06	.03	-.25**	-.35**	-.33**	-.13**
Working as part of a team					1	.22**	-.34**	.01	-.18**	-.28**	.01	-.1*	-.2**	-.18**	-.2**	-.27**
Variety in work assignments						1	-.13**	-.02	-.24**	-.06	-.03	-.14**	0	-.04	-.11*	-.25**
High prestige and social status							1	-.09	.19**	.15**	-.16**	.02	.01	-.14**	-.11*	.02
Friendly and congenial associates								1	.11*	-.02	-.14**	-.27**	-.05	-.12**	.04	-.12**
High salary									1	.15**	-.12**	-.13**	-.2**	-.05	-.04	.14**
Gray income										1	-.14**	-.03	.1*	-.06	-.07	-.01
Chance to use my special abilities											1	.03	-.15**	-.09	-.12**	-.19**
Chance to make a contribution to important decisions												1	.07	-.06	-.07	.03
Freedom from supervision													1	.22**	.25**	-.07
Chance to engage in satisfying leisure activities														1	.34**	.12**
Freedom from pressures to conform both on and off the job															1	.06
Opportunity for advancement																1

Note: *p < .1. **p < .05.

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Notes

1. In 2005, the average salary of civil servants in 2005 was 20,531 yuan and ranked as 11th among the 19 sectors. The ranks move up to the 9th in 2007 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/nds/j/). This is a result of the several rounds of salary adjustment reform of the Chinese government. Some scholars claim that the salary of civil servants are even higher than that of private employees, after taking into consideration the subsidies of housing, education of children, welfare, and other fringe benefits. Yet, few systematic analyses are available supporting the high salary of public sector jobs. We will return to this topic in the “Interpretation” section.
2. In 2003, the People’s Court and People’s Procuratorate also started to adopt the civil service exam system. After the establishment of the Civil Service Law in 2005, all applicants for the nonleading positions below the section member (keyuan) or its equivalent in civil service should take the civil service exam, indicating a nationwide adoption of the exam system at both central and local levels.
3. For instance, refer to the Reuter’s article, January 18, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE50I03020090119>.
4. We interviewed Chinese scholars and students in Beijing to complement the survey analysis. Interestingly, five professors we interviewed concurred that all hypotheses except Hypothesis 1 are important to Chinese students. Regarding Hypothesis 1, professors interviewed were rather skeptical to the importance of public service spirits, which is different from the view of students interviewed who acknowledged the importance of public service spirit.
5. For instance, Kleinginna and Kleinginna (1981) review 140 definitions of motivation and show that motivation has been understood as an internal mechanism (phenomenological or physiological), functional processes (energizing, directing, and both), factors influencing all or partial behaviors, and temporal or long-lasting concepts.
6. The 14 universities are Beijing Normal University, Beijing University, China Agricultural University, Fudan University, Nanjing University, Nankai University, Renmin University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Tianjin University, Tsinghua University, University of Science and Technology of China, Xi’an University of Transportation, Zhejiang University, and Zhongshan University (in alphabetical order). This university-based sampling has two important implications. First, as the sampled universities are highly prestigious universities in China, findings need to be generalized with caution. Second, as the sample selection is

- based on an independent variable (university), this exogenous sample selection does not produce biased estimates even if random sampling assumption does not hold (Wooldridge, 2009, pp. 323-324).
7. This high percentage might be so because we targeted political science department students. However, the percentage is still high even if we compare it with Singaporean students in the political science department of a Singapore university, of whom 33.6% chose public sector jobs (Ko, 2012).
 8. As well known, few prescriptive models are known for multicollinearity. The best way is to acquire a consistent estimate by using a large sample.
 9. We interviewed five professors of Peking University, Renmin University, and Central University of Finance and Economics, and they support this view. On the contrary, university students we interviewed believe that the private jobs give them better opportunity to make more money.

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