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Civil Service Merit and Employment at Will Personnel Systems: The Role of Transformational Change Leadership in Public Sector Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, Retention, and Succession Planning

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Civil Service Merit and Employment at Will Personnel Systems:

The Role of Transformational Change Leadership in

Public Sector Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion,

Retention, and Succession Planning

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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I thank our Lord and Savior for giving me the strength and courage to accomplish this lifelong goal. Moreover, this dissertation and my educational and professional pursuits are dedicated to my husband of 25 years. We did it! Additionally, I recognize my parents, family, and friends, especially Carol, who supported me through this journey. I am grateful to my dissertation committee for taking on a unique and novel dissertation. Moreover, I am grateful to the Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) for serving as my population and sample for this study. Furthermore, I am appreciative to my cats Blayze and Piper, who served as my coauthors. Finally, I want to express gratitude to my two cats Lilly and Moofy who passed away during my doctoral journey. You will live forever in my heart.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart,

And lean not on your own understanding;

In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And He shall direct your paths.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV

ABSTRACT

Civil Service Merit and Employment at Will Personnel Systems:

The Role of Transformational Change Leadership in Public

Sector Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion,

Retention, and Succession Planning

by Angela Lauria-Gunnink

Purpose: This nonexperimental, descriptive, and comparative study aimed to identify and describe the differences between Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) professionals who worked in a state or local government civil service merit or employment at will (EAW) personnel system.

Methodology: This nonexperimental, descriptive, and comparative study identified and described the responses of 214 state and local government PSHRA professionals throughout the United States, focusing on their respective personnel systems. The researcher collected data and tabulated descriptive statistics and *z* scores to compare and statistically determine the differences between the two public sector personnel systems.

Findings: The 214 PSHRA professionals who participated in this study indicated various findings. Although PSHRA professionals working within an EAW system averaged higher in recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning than those working within a civil service merit system, hiring was the only statistically significant difference between the two personnel systems. In addition, the need for transformational change leadership averaged very high among both personnel systems, but very little transformational change is occurring within recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning.

Conclusions: This study nearly entirely debunks the new public management (NPM) theoretical framework and, consequently, EAW. The z scores indicated that there was only one statistically significant difference between merit and EAW personnel systems, which was in hiring. Therefore, civil service merit system competitive examinations mediate the ability of PSHRA professionals to effectively hire the most qualified candidate for the job. Furthermore, transformational change leadership averaged as a high need, but little transformational change is occurring.

Recommendations: As this study nearly entirely debunked the NPM theoretical framework and EAW as a more effective public sector personnel system, further qualitative and quantitative research would help reveal what the impediments are in supporting the NPM theoretical framework and HRM reform. Moreover, further research should examine why, despite the high need for transformational change leadership, transformational change has stalled or has stopped altogether. Additional research will help scholars and practitioners to understand what has changed with NPM, EAW, and the HRM reform movement that gained momentum in the 1990s.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

According to Postell (2020), during the time of the six inaugural presidents of the United States, who spanned from President George Washington to President John Quincy Adams, public sector jobs were filled based on knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)—otherwise known as merit. Moreover, these inaugural six presidents used neither a civil service commission nor competitive examinations for public sector jobs. Instead, these six presidents hired public sector employees based on competence.

Postell (2020) stated that an unofficial written civil service merit system was successful in the early republic. However, this unwritten civil service merit system changed to a patronage system when President Andrew Jackson was elected in 1828. Moreover, Postell explained that President Andrew Jackson's administrative offices were reserved for the elites, and as a result, this progressed into a system of everlasting tenure:

Jackson's republican ideal of the rotation in office was also referred to as a "spoils system," based on a famous statement by Senator William Marcy from New York in 1832: "To the victor belong the spoils of the enemy." (p. 6)

Postell (2020) explained that President Andrew Jackson's ideal of appointing elites to public sector positions rewarded supporters rather than making appointments based on merit and qualifications, producing criticism. As a result of Andrew Jackson's spoils system, the need to appoint public sector staff by competitive examinations arose almost concurrently with the development of patronage.

Although meaningful reform of the spoils system started in the 1860s, reform to how government employees were hired was legislated by the Pendleton Act of 1883 (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.) after an upset job candidate

assassinated President Garfield. Therefore, for all three levels of government, unless a person is an except officer who is appointed, contracted, temporary, an employee of the legislative or judicial branches, or works within an employment at will (EAW) system, all government employees are subject to taking civil service merit competitive examinations, either oral, written, or both, to be hired and promoted. Even though the development of the civil service merit system is pivotal in U.S. history, scholars have argued about the legitimacy of the civil service merit system today (Kettl, 2015). Indeed, all 50 states build their own civil service and merit traditions. The development of the civil service merit system in 1883 was pivotal in the history of the United States. Proponents of civil service merit system reform say that the public sector needs to be able to retain its best and brightest, and the only way to achieve these goals is to transform civil service merit systems.

Erdreich (1997), a proponent of human resource management (HRM) reform, found that only 20% of government employees who were surveyed claimed that their agency promotes staff with integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest. Moreover, Getha-Taylor (2019) argued that public sector employees feel underpaid because of the civil service merit system and competitive examinations and, as a result, state and local government agencies cannot retain high performers. Gossett (2003) pointed to Georgia's civil service merit system reform in 1996, in which the state eliminated its merit system, and how revolutionary this reform has allowed the state to hire qualified workers and inspire transformational change leaders. Walters (2002) analyzed Texas', Georgia's, and Florida's civil service merit system reforms and concluded that the fundamental issues of whether their public employees are paid fairly need to be

considered. In addition, Kettl (2015) argued that the gap between the government's promises and its performance is growing and as a result problems multiply and costs escalate. Kettl also argued that the research community on HRM reform has largely been asleep at a time when professional government is under attack.

Brewer and Kellough (2016) suggested that "researchers should continue to examine both the intended and unintended consequences of reforms and report on the broader implications of their findings" (p. 34). Similarly, Erdreich (1997) claimed that although the ultimate goal is to have a highly motivated public sector workforce, scholars and practitioners must work together to create that future with additional research.

The new public management (NPM), also known as the reinventing government movement coined by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), prompted many states in the 1990s to rethink their civil service merit system. As a result of the civil service merit system HRM reform, there are primarily two public sector HR personnel systems in the United States: (a) the traditional civil service merit system, which uses competitive examinations to recruit, hire, promote, and retain public sector employees while trying to be effective at succession planning, and (b) Employment at will (EAW), which came from the NPM movement, and reformed strict civil service merit system rules, mirrors the private sector, and is decentralized and flexible. Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) publication on *Reinventing Government* was a fundamental catalyst focusing on inefficient and ineffective government and why reinvention was needed to improve service delivery to the citizenry. The authors spoke to how "bureaucratic institutions developed during the industrial era—public and private—increasingly fail us" (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, p. 15). In addition, Osborne and Gaebler argued that, while in some circumstances

bureaucratic institutions may still work, the public sector needs to “empower citizens rather than simply serving them” (p. 15). According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (1995), government reform was “organized around four general principles: cutting red tape, putting customers first, empowering employees to get results, and cutting back to the basics” (p. 2).

According to a survey conducted by Young et al. (2022), from December 2021 to February 2022, the “state and local government job opening rate was the highest in over 20 years” (p. 7). However, according to Zhavoronkova and Naranjo (2022), state and local governments struggle more than the private sector to hire for open jobs. In addition, the National Academy of Public Administration (2020) reported that since 2018, the working-age population has been declining. In the same survey, in 2009, the retirement rate of state and local government employees was 12%, and in 2022, it accelerated to 53% (National Academy of Public Administration, 2020). As a result, state and local government professionals foresaw a large portion of their workforce retiring in the next few years. All referenced reports suggested that the public sector will face recruitment and retention challenges for the foreseeable future.

Linked to the government employment gap, governments at all levels struggle with succession planning. Succession planning is supposed to be implemented in all employment sectors and ensures that filling open positions due to retirements and transferrable knowledge are done effectively. Because of the ever-widening employment gap, many governments face the challenge of providing service delivery continuity and consistency. In October 2016, Mission Square Research Institute surveyed members of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR),

renamed Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) in January 2023. A total of 295 IPMA-HR members completed The Center for State and Local Government Excellence's survey, which concluded,

Thirty-three percent of respondents reported that they expect to develop a formal succession planning process within the next five years, while 27 percent are currently developing a formal process, and 11 percent already have a formal process in place. 16 percent do not expect to develop a process in the next five years.

- 37 percent say succession planning is not a leadership priority;
- 19 percent report a lack of internal expertise;
- 12 percent report a lack of financial resources; and
- 5 percent express a general view that the organization does not need a formal plan. (Mission Square Research Institute, 2016, para. 2)

Focusing on state and local governments, recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning are genuine issues nationwide. According to Bilmes and Gould (2009), succession planning gives governments and organizations a head start in attracting top job applicants. Without HRM reform, state and local governments will be forced to change because of the numerous retirements and shortage of inside candidates. For state and local governments to achieve this goal and keep up with the private sector with more flexible rules, they will “require new recruiting techniques to identify, attract, and then integrate external recruits successfully” (Bilmes & Gould, 2009, p. 23).

Background on Civil Service Merit System Competitive Examinations

Wilson (1989) spoke about Max Weber's vision of the public sector bureaucracy, which emphasized the traditional public administration model. In 1946, Weber was the first to highlight the critical need for a top-to-bottom hierarchy in the public sector. According to Weber (1946, as cited in Pfiffner, 2004), "The bureaucratic system is based on a set of rules and regulations flowing from public law; the system of control is rational and legal. The role of the bureaucrat is strictly subordinate to the political supervisor" (p. 95). Weber argued that the public sector would fall apart without this strict hierarchy.

Change and government are not necessarily synonymous. Public administration "has undergone a plethora of transformation ushering in different paradigms at any given period of time—from the traditional administrative system, new public management (NPM), to post-new public management—Public Value, Value for Money" (Bojang, 2020, p. 1). Bojang (2020) further explained that these paradigm shifts are an indicator that the public sector faces complex challenges and is on a continual search on how government can be more efficient. Light (1997) claimed that "Americans are not quite sure whether employees are the problem or whether government mostly suffers from good people trapped in bad systems" (p. 45).

Legislation on Civil Service Merit System Competitive Examinations

Competitive examinations used by most states and local governments may mediate the effects of employee recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and their ability to effectively implement better or new succession planning practices. Civil service merit system standards are specified in the Code of Federal Regulations 5 CFR Subpart F Section 900.603 (National Archives and Records Administration, 2024). The code states

that employees may advance based on their relative KSAs. Most states use written and oral competitive examinations as the primary source to meet this requirement.

In addition, pursuant to the 5 CFR 900.603 (National Archives and Records Administration, 2024), the code embodies the requirements for authenticating the standards that must be included in a civil service merit system when authenticated by a state or local government. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM, 2019) responds to requests regarding implementing the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) of 1970 regulations. Therefore, the IPA and the 5 CFR 900.603 regulations apply when states and local governments seek to establish a civil service merit personnel system to receive federal funds. This being understood, the IPA does not prescribe a particular staffing method.

According to OPM (2019), the state or local government can determine the most suitable staffing method; however, “regardless of the staffing method chosen, the state or local agency [government] must certify that it is using a merit personnel system that meets the standards outlined in 5 CFR 900.603” (OPM, 2019, para. 1). Therefore, states and local governments must use a civil service merit system and demonstrate that they use competitive examinations to staff their respective government positions to receive federal funding.

Purpose of State Competitive Examinations

The Pendleton Act of 1883 was founded on British precedents and established the civil service merit system rules that included “1) competitive examinations, 2) relative security of tenure, and 3) political neutrality” (Van Riper, 1958, p. 100), except for those exempted officers who were appointed and employees of the legislative and judicial

branches. Kett (2013) argued that supporters of merit in government devoted themselves to killing the spoils system and introduced merit based competitive examinations to reduce nepotism. However, Kett argued that civil service merit examinations only made sense when there was common knowledge assumed to be possessed by all Americans. Civil service merit competitive examinations involve more than holding an examination by title. In addition, civil service merit competitive examinations require job postings and public announcements.

Tools for Hiring, Advancement, and Retention

States and local governments vary in their approaches to the essential components of the traditional civil service merit system and the use of competitive examinations to recruit, hire promote, and retain public sector employees (Wiesen et al., 1990). Despite these variations, Sundell (2014) discussed how “there are two essential aspects of the traditional merit system competitive examinations: 1) hiring based on objective criteria and 2) rewarding competence over political patronage” (p. 442). However, Wiesen et al. (1990) argued that civil service merit competitive examinations do not consider reasonableness because applications for the examination may outnumber the available positions. In addition, they expanded on civil service merit competitive examinations for recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention and how these appointments are made from scores on that particular examination. Wiesen et al. further argued that cutoff scores vary by state and local government regarding who qualifies to be on the employment lists. Regarding a timeline, they discussed how the time between civil service merit competitive examinations and the ability to hire and promote can take 4 to 5 months and sometimes even longer.

Evolution of NPM

Hood (1991) coined NPM, which refers to government organizational change and reforms at all levels to cut red tape within the public sector and mimic business practices from the private sector. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) infamously wrote on the need to reinvent government because the public sector needs to be more entrepreneurial and flexible. With significant concerns over the efficacy of the public sector, Gibbs (2020) discussed how in the 1980s, a bipartisan civil service reform movement began in the United States. According to Gibbs, NPM, and consequently EAW, weakens if not eliminates traditional civil service merit protections for public sector employees by focusing on private sector practices.

In addition, Gibbs (2020) stated that one of the most significant reform efforts of the NPM is to reclassify traditionally protected bureaucrats as EAW employees with hiring and firing practices similar to the private sector. Moreover, Gibbs illustrated how civil service merit reform bills have been adopted by several states that “have significantly expanded the proportion of at-will state employees and reduced the number of classified positions under traditional service protections” (p. 280).

Theoretical Framework

NPM is the modern-day framework or paradigm through which governments at all levels are “modernized and re-engineered to strengthen the relationship between government and society” (Fakhrul, 2015, p. 142). The NPM movement is a bundle of techniques of private sector practices that “promise a leaner and better government, decentralization, empowerment, customer satisfaction, and better mechanisms of public accountability” (Fakhrul, 2015, p. 142). Furthermore, Fakhrul (2015) stated that the

traditional civil service merit system has been replaced in many countries by the advancement of reform processes since the late 1980s. Therefore, the NPM, also known as reinventing government, represents a transformational change in the public sector to cultivate and enhance the relationship between government and society.

Shi (2023) explained NPM as follows: “The productive experiences of contemporary economics and management ideas of the private sector are utilized as a reference for development, and therefore, they provide a suitable theoretical framework for the actualization of public sector management” (p. 1). Shi also explained that NPM has four main parts: (a) market-based, public sector management, (b) freeing the operation of the public sector, (c) policy related management or activities that need to be handled appropriately, and (d) developing and inspiring of entrepreneurial public managers.

Because NPM rejects the traditional civil service merit system principles of conducting government activities, it is often considered radical. However, without the Weberian hierarchal government structure, government can be more responsive and accountable to the citizenry. Furthermore, Gunnink (2001) found that the empirical claims made by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) remained valid concerning Fairfield, California, as one of the first cities to implement an entrepreneurial form of government and effectively adopt NPM.

Discontent With Civil Service Merit Systems and Competitive Government Examinations

Literature on civil service merit competitive examinations and their impact on employee retention is scant. What is clear is that the practice of requiring a civil service

merit competitive examination, either written or oral, for advancement may inhibit the use of a transformational change leadership. Within state and local government civil service merit systems, states and local governments may use standardized and/or oral examinations for promotional opportunities. Greenan et al. (2019) studied oral examinations and found that they can lead to gender and place of birth inequalities. In addition, the National Academy of Public Administration (2020) found that in six states, heads of state government departments had difficulty working within a civil service merit system and, as a result, found ways to manipulate the system to promote high-performing employees. There are additional negative consequences of working within a civil service merit system. Lavigna and Hays (2004) argued how competitive examinations and arbitrary civil service merit system rules restrict the hiring choices of managers and supervisors from hiring the best candidates.

F. J. Thompson (2003) published a book featuring 30 scholarly articles identifying problems with government civil service merit systems and suggested HRM reforms. F. J. Thompson reported that reformers have increasingly found that the government personnel systems undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of the government, and competitive examinations contribute to this growing problem. In addition, F. J. Thompson argued that HRM reform of government personnel systems should be deregulated and decentralized without returning to the spoils system. Southworth (2000) proposed adding performance assessments into an examination score that would increase the civil service examinations' validity and utility dramatically.

Johnson and Lewis (2020) stated that the effect of employee quality on civil service merit competitive examinations offers little evidence of the impacts of

competitive examinations relative to the many hiring authorities that have increased in recent decades. Further, the authors argued that although alternative hiring methods have emerged, negative and positive effects on the overall qualifications and quality of the public sector are not entirely known (Johnson & Lewis, 2020).

Finally, Kettl (2015) addressed the broken civil service merit system and stated that the bipartisan Pendleton Act is disintegrating. Kettl noted that the traditional civil service merit system is not in tune with the job's actual duties. Moreover, Kettl argued that as the public sector struggles to hire suitable candidates through a cumbersome civil service merit system hiring process, "Most agencies struggle to hire the people they need for the job to be done – and there is little strategic workforce planning to understand what people they need to begin with" (p. 422). Finally, with the relationship to the baby boomer retirements, Kettl further argued that governments have not been engaged in the underlying question of how best to get the workforce that the government needs for jobs that have to be done.

State Personnel Systems and Succession Planning—Does One Affect the Other?

Wilkerson (2007) argued that public sector succession planning lags behind the private sector because of tenure, political leadership, personnel system rules, and lack of resources and focus. According to Marrelli (2022), "The Federal Merit System Principles and the Prohibited Personnel Practices established in Title 5 of the U.S. Code substantially limit flexibility in employee development and promotions, both key aspects of succession planning" (p. 630). Marrelli argued that succession planning is challenging in the public sector because of this and uncertain budgets.

Statement of the Research Problem

A survey of the literature revealed whether or not scholars support or oppose civil service merit system reform and its linkages to competitive examinations, virtually all agree that not enough empirical research has been completed. Kettl (2015) specified five mega-issues and questions about modern government that have yet to be fully addressed, which include,

1) Does the civil service have an improper balance between protecting civil service employees and holding them accountable? 2) Would cutting the number of government employees really help cut the size of government? 3) Have government employees simply come the easiest target for government bashers? 4) What kind of civil service do we need to equip government with the skills it needs to deliver the services citizens demand? and 5) How does the role of people in government bureaucracy share the role of government in society? ... The consequence of not understanding how to produce results is that the research community has largely been asleep at the switch a time when five mega-issues have risen. That is a huge tragedy, because at the very time that fundamental building blocks of a modern, professional government are most under attack, the field has little to say about it. (pp. 422–423)

Likewise, Beer et al. (2004) and Chandler (2016) specified that although civil service merit system reformers want system change, scholarly literature has not addressed how this can be accomplished. To remedy the paucity of research on state civil service merit system reform, Brewer and Kellough (2016) suggested that “researchers should continue to examine both the intended and unintended consequences of reforms and

report on the broader implications of their findings” (p. 34). Similarly, Erdreich (1997) claimed that although the ultimate goal is to have a highly motivated, public sector workforce, scholars and practitioners must work together to create that future with additional research.

Brans and Hondeghem (2005) found that civil service merit competitive examinations focus on soft behavioral skills at the expense of knowledge and have limited attention to public sector experience. Furthermore, Brans and Hondeghem stated that “a more definitive judgment can only be arrived at after more research, including extensive, longitudinal and comparative analyses will show the way the different aspects of competency management (competitive examinations) interfere with political control and administrative discretion” (p. 836).

Greenan et al. (2019) found that it is better to guide states and local governments in their “revision of competitive examinations, further research is necessary to determine to what extent the nature of written tests is responsible for the inequalities of success and how it penalizes some groups of candidates” (p. 380). In addition, “Future work might also consider placing the present study in a theoretical framework that models hiring managers’ decision-making and contemplates the trade-offs associated with alternative hiring authorities” (Johnson & Lewis, 2020, p. 217). Finally, Tria and Valotti (2012) concluded that public sector service employee retention research is not yet there.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this nonexperimental, descriptive, and comparative research aimed to compare state and local government professionals who are members of the Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) who work within a state or local government

civil service merit system or within a state or local government EAW system.

Furthermore, this study examined the extent to which each personnel employment system allowed state and local government PSHRA professionals to recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff; how their respective personnel system impacted succession planning; and the need for transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study include the following:

1. To what extent do PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government personnel system is effective with recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of state and local government employees?
2. To what extent do state and local government PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government's personnel system is helpful with effective succession planning when hiring new talent?
3. To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change leadership is necessary regarding their personnel system's recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?
4. To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change is occurring within their personnel system regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?

5. To what degree are there differences between PSHRA state and local government professionals regarding their personnel system related to recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning?

Significance of the Study

This study was significant in addressing the paucity of research on recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, succession planning, and addressing the possible inequities within state and local government civil service merit systems. According to Lapuente and Van de Walle (2020), “Despite an increase in empirical studies, we, however, still have limited understanding about its effects: has NPM increased, or decreased, the quality of the public services delivered?” (p. 462). Similarly, Alonso et al. (2015) stated that a lack of comparable data has hindered attempts at assessing the effects of NPM. Alonso et al. further argued that the lack of measurements of NPM is ironic, given that the NPM proponents argue to improve the ability to measure public sector performance.

Greenan et al. (2019) found that to better guide states in their “revision of competitive examinations, further research is necessary to determine to what extent the nature of written tests are responsible for the inequalities of success and how it penalizes some groups of candidates” (p. 380). In addition, “Future work might also consider placing the present study in a theoretical framework that models hiring managers’ decision-making and contemplates the trade-offs associated with alternative hiring authorities” (Johnson & Lewis, 2020, p. 217). Pfiffner (2004) suggested that the NPM approaches can be helpful to governments and should be considered, but NPM is not a solution to all problems within state governments. Finally, Tria and Valotti (2012) concluded that public sector service employee retention research is not yet finished.

According to Brown (2004), although the public sector has seen a significant NPM reform agenda for nearly 3 decades (replacing the Weberian, command-and-control, top-to-bottom practices with a performance-based culture), “there is little attention afforded to the specific field of HRM [reform] research and academic inquiry in relation to the public sector” (p. 304). Shim (2001) also argued that although there are many reasons why HRM reform is essential, one of the main reasons is due to the number of public sector employees who will retire. As a result, government needs to be even more competitive with the private sector.

According to Bowman and West (2007), the radical NPM movement and consequently EAW, are seen as solving problems instead of creating them. But is this true? Although scholars have studied EAW and its implications, this body of literature was not systematic. It has not precisely evaluated the relationship between radical civil service merit system reforms and their impacts on public sector personnel practices (Condrey & Battaglio, 2007). Therefore, according to many scholars, to better understand HRM reform, it is necessary to examine them from multiple perspectives (Condrey & Battaglio, 2007; Goodman & French, 2011).

Whether or not scholars support or oppose civil service merit system reform, virtually all agree that not enough empirical research has been completed to know the true impact. Moreover, although HRM reform is happening in some states, others are hard-pressed to change. Kettl (2015) argued that the research community on civil service merit system reform has largely been asleep and is an immense “tragedy because, at the very time that the fundamental building blocks of a modern, professional government are more under attack, the field has little to say about it” (p. 423). In addition, Brewer and Kellough

(2016) stated that “researchers should continue to examine both the intended and unintended consequences of reforms and report on the broader implications of their findings” (p. 34). Similarly, Erdreich (1997) claimed that although the ultimate goal is to have a highly motivated, public sector workforce, scholars and practitioners must work together to create that future with additional research. Likewise, Beer et al. (2004) and Chandler (2016) specified that although civil service merit system reformers want system change, scholarly literature has not addressed how this can be accomplished.

Definitions

The following terms are defined for the relevance and conceptual framework of this study.

Civil Service. A professional civil service has long been considered essential to public sector performance. Governments in the United States “have developed merit-based civil service systems designed to insulate public servants from political influence and to capitalize on their professional expertise” (Coggburn et al., 2010, p. 189).

Competitive Examinations. These can be written or oral examinations administered by state and local governments. Sundell (2014) discussed how “there are two essential aspects of the traditional merit system competitive examinations: 1) hiring based on objective criteria, ... and 2) rewarding competence over political patronage” (p. 442).

Decentralization. Decentralization is reforming government to be less centralized. According to Coggburn et al. (2010), “Advocates for radical civil service [merit] reform press for greater decentralization of HRM decision-making authority, greater deregulation to facilitate that decision-making authority, and the adoption of

private sector–inspired/market-based tools like pay for performance and outsourcing” (p. 190).

Employment at Will (EAW). As EAW implies, employers can recruit, hire, promote, and terminate their working relationship with an employee but not without legal standards and ethical considerations (Goodman & Cohen, 2018).

Human Resources. According to Investopedia, Human resources (HR) is the division of a business responsible for finding, recruiting, screening, and training job applicants and administering employee benefit programs. The primary goal of HR is to support employee recruitment, retention, engagement, and overall productivity, which can vary between organizations and positions. (Kenton, 2024, para. 1)

Human Resource Management (HRM). According to MacKenzie and Pantelakis (2023), “Human Resource Management (HRM) is the practice of managing people within an organization. It involved hiring, training, compensation, managing, and retaining employees. HRM covers strategic planning, decision-making, and work related to building and maintaining a team” (Resources for Employers webpage heading).

Merit System. Merit system standards are specified in the Code of Federal Regulations 5 CFR Subpart F Section 900.603 (National Archives and Records Administration, 2024). The 5 CFR 900.603 states that employees may advance based on their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs).

New Public Management (NPM). The NPM is the modern-day framework or paradigm through which governments at all levels are “modernized and re-engineered to strengthen the relationship between government and society” (Fakhrul, 2015, p. 142).

Paradigm Shift. A paradigm is a shift in theory because of another paradigm that seems to be better. According to Kuhn (1996), this shift is called a scientific revolution.

Pendleton Act. The Pendleton Act of 1883 was founded on British precedents and established the civil service merit system rules that include “1) competitive examinations, 2) relative security of tenure, and 3) political neutrality” (Van Riper, 1958, p. 100).

Public Sector Personnel Systems. There are two prominent public sector personnel systems in the United States: the civil service merit systems regulations, policies, and practices, bound by bureaucratic rules and regulations, and employment at will (EAW) and its regulations, policies, and practices, which mirror the private sector with less bureaucracy and more flexibility.

Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA). Formerly known as the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR), PSHRA is the leading dedicated public sector national association for HR professionals practicing at all three levels of government. PSHRA changed its name from IPMA-HR to PSHRA in January 2023.

Reinventing Government/Entrepreneurial Government. Public sector governance systems can be fundamentally transformed to function as efficiently and effectively as the private sector (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992).

Rule of Three. The rule of three is used in most states that have merit systems: After an examination has been held, candidates who have passed are placed on an eligible list [in descending score order]. ... Candidates are selected off of the eligible list using the rule of three. The rule of three means that agencies count

down the first three people on the list. These three people plus anyone else at the third person's score are the eligibles they can consider [to fill a position]. (New York State [NYS], Career Mobility Office, n.d., Eligible Lists section).

The rule of three can equate to the list becoming blocked (J. R. Thompson, 2021).

Blocked lists are a byproduct of the rule of three found within civil service merit systems.

Because managers need to hire according to the rule of three, if none of the three are desirable for any reason, they block the rest of the qualified candidates on the examination score list from further hiring off that list.

Succession Planning. Succession planning management is a way to guarantee continuity in critical roles and to maintain and nurture intellect and organizational knowledge (Wiesman & Baker, 2013).

Transformational Change. To become a transformational change leader requires personal change:

Transformational change calls for leaders and employees to transform *themselves*—changing their mindsets and fundamental assumptions about reality; their ways of being, working, and relating; their behavior and style; and their level of personal empowerment and effectiveness at causing or supporting things to happen in the organization. We call this process of personal change *self-mastery*, which implies that the individual leader must choose to change, be aware of what needs to change, and be empowered to do so. (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010, p. 16)

Transformational Change Leadership. Transformational change leadership convinces followers to surpass their self-interest in the workplace while enriching their subordinates' level of need (Bass & Bass, 2008).

Transformational change leadership requires conscious process thinking, intentionally attending to inputs, outputs, what has occurred historically, and how present actions can best support future steps in the change effort. This is distinct from project thinking and systems thinking, or the use of checklists or cookbooks for change. Through the conscious process thinking lens, leaders see their organizations as multi-dimensional, interconnected living systems in constant and perpetual motion—all quadrants and all levels. They see them as ever evolving and constantly seek to advance their development. In designing their transformational change process, they account for the fact that their best-laid plans will be constantly adjusted to the realities that occur at all levels of the organization as change proceeds. (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010, p. 20)

Delimitations

Delimitations that limited the scope of this study included only state and local government PSHRA members. PSHRA is the only dedicated public sector national association for HR professionals practicing at all three levels of government. Membership requires a paid membership, so not all state and local government HR professionals are members, and not all states have members. Moreover, delimitations included a small sample size and did not include interviews.

Organization of the Study

This research study was organized into five chapters, a reference list, and appendices. Chapter I introduced civil service state merit systems and EAW, their history, and the NPM theoretical framework. Chapter II reviews the literature regarding the history of the NPM theoretical framework and reinventing government, differences between civil service merit systems and EAW, proponents and opponents for each public sector personnel system, succession planning, and why transformational change leadership is essential for state and local governments.

Chapter III explains the research design and methodology used for this study. The data gathered from the surveys measured the way state and local government PSHRA professionals view their ability to recruit, hire, promote, and retain employees; how each personnel system contributed to the ability for proper and effective succession planning; and the need for transformational change leadership.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “Statistical conclusion validity will help determine if claimed relationships reflect actual relationships” (p. 105). The survey was truthful because it helped capture how state and local government PSHRA members view their workforce and their ability to retain transformational change leaders. Chapter IV defines the population used in the study. Furthermore, it includes the sample and data gathering process, the approach used to collect and analyze data collected, and the techniques used to analyze the data collected. Chapter V contains the summary of the study. This includes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review evaluated the scholarly contributions on civil service state and local government merit systems related to the new public management (NPM) theoretical framework and human resource management (HRM) reform pertaining to public sector recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, succession planning, and transformational change leadership. The development of the civil service merit system in 1883 was pivotal in the history of the United States. However, scholars have argued about the legitimacy of the civil service merit system today. Proponents of civil service merit system reform have argued that the public sector needs to be able to retain its best and brightest, and the only way to achieve this goal is to transform civil service merit systems.

Erdreich (1997), a proponent of reform, found that only 20% of government employee surveys revealed that their agency promotes staff with integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest. Moreover, Getha-Taylor (2019) argued that public sector employees feel underpaid because of the civil service merit system and competitive examinations and, as a result, public sector agencies cannot retain high performers. Gossett (2003) pointed to Georgia's civil service merit system reform in 1996, in which the state eliminated its civil service merit system, and how revolutionary this reform has allowed the state to hire qualified workers and inspire transformational change leaders. Walters (2002) analyzed Texas', Georgia's, and Florida's civil service merit system reforms and concluded that the fundamental issues of whether their public employees are paid fairly need to be considered. In addition, Kettl (2015) argued that the gap between the government's promises and its performance is growing, and, as a result, problems

multiply and costs escalate. Kettl also argued that the research community on civil service merit system reform has largely been asleep at a time when professional government is under attack. In addition, Mills (2010) stated: “[We are] treating symptoms, not the underlying illness” (p. 71).

Brewer and Kellough (2016) suggested that “researchers should continue to examine both the intended and unintended consequences of reforms and report on the broader implications of their findings” (p. 34). Similarly, Erdreich (1997) claimed that although the ultimate goal is to have a highly motivated, public sector workforce, scholars and practitioners must work together to create that future with additional research.

This literature review examined the existing literature on state and local government HRM reform and its impact on state and local government employee recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning. This literature review also focused on the NPM theoretical framework, which is an outgrowth of the state and local government employment at will (EAW) personnel systems, as they have reformed their civil service merit system. In addition, the need for transformational change leadership in state and local government was covered.

Background

This research study analyzed the extent to which state and local government Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) professionals can recruit, hire, promote, and retain employees, and the subsequent effects on succession planning based on their respective state or local government personnel system. PSHRA is the only dedicated national public sector HR association practicing at all three levels of government in the

United States. Moreover, this research study analyzed whether transformational change leadership was essential and occurring in the HR professionals' state or local government based on their respective personnel system.

Burns (1978) was the first to introduce transformational change leadership in a political context and its contrasting features with transactional leadership. Burns explained transformational leadership as follows:

Transforming leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose.

Transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus, it has a transforming effect on both. (p. 20)

According to Bass (1997), "Of the different leadership styles presented in the literature, transformational [change] leadership is characterized by envisioning, enabling, and empowering employees" (p. 21). Transformational change leadership focuses on building positive relationships between the leader and subordinates. The relationship between the two is not forced, such as under the command-and-control management model. Tupper and Ellis (2022) found that the command-and-control model contributes to the lack of trust, discourages workers from using their skills, and prevents workers from making autonomous decisions. Because the command-and-control model is archaic, transformational change leaders make it their mission to influence relationships

positively, embrace emotional intelligence, and allow for autonomy. Motivating employees through charisma and persuasion, characterized by transformational change leadership, positively affects productivity and well-being (Dughera, 2022; Tupper & Ellis, 2022).

Ismail and Warrack (2019) reported a relationship between employee well-being and retention. However, Saeed and You (2021) found that employee embeddedness mediated the effects of transformational change leadership on employee retention. Saeed and You further suggested that transformational change leadership is one of the greatest draws for employees. In addition, the authors found that meeting employees' goals increases their interconnection, allowing for employee retention (Saeed & You, 2021). Similarly, Jiatong et al. (2022) "confirmed that transformational [change] leadership is the key catalyst in both encouraging employee affective commitment and job performance throughout the mediator, employee engagement" (p. 9). Mills (2010) stated,

America needs a dedicated cadre of truly selfless public servants, now more than ever before. But we don't need two million of them. Nor is it possible to have many, in any event; not if we're talking about genuine civil servants—people with a true service orientation, willing and able to put the public interest ahead of their own self-interest. Such people do exist. (p. 145)

Evolution of Civil Service Merit Systems and Competitive Examinations

Ketl (2015) stated that the Pendleton Civil Service Act of 1883 was a model for state and local governments to emulate when considering building their personnel system. Further, Ruhil and Camões (2003) stated that shortly after the act, New York was the first state in the nation to adopt a civil service merit system in 1883, followed soon by

Massachusetts. However, though a few states adopted a civil service merit system, there was little activity until additional states implemented a civil service merit system in 1905 (Ruhil & Camões, 2003). Civil service merit reform reemerged in the late 1930s when Wisconsin and Illinois legislated their civil service merit system, followed by four other states. According to Ruhil and Camões, some scholars have argued that the increase in states implementing a civil service merit system was driven by the 1939 amendment of the Social Security Act of 1935: “The 1939 amendment essentially required that every state receiving Social Security money place its unemployment security and public assistance employees in the civil service by January 1, 1940, or forego the Social Security funds altogether” (p. 31). The authors further argued that almost 24, or 68%, of the remaining states established a civil service merit system between 1936 and 1939.

Therefore, the establishment of civil service state merit systems does not fully explain merit principles throughout the United States, which were implemented before 1940, but could serve as an explanation for the remaining states to adopt their civil service merit system. Ruhil and Camões (2003) concluded their study by finding that states were primarily motivated by economic, political, and demographic shifts within and throughout states, which led to local governments being responsible for their timing of adopting their civil service merit system.

Legislation on Civil Service Merit System Competitive Examinations

Civil service merit system competitive examinations used by most state and local governments may mediate the effects of employee recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention, which dovetails into succession planning. Wilson (1989) stated, “When rules are clear, governance is better” (p. 335).

Civil service merit system standards are specified in the Code of Federal Regulations 5 CFR (National Archives and Records Administration, 2024). The 5 CFR Subpart F Section 900.603 states that public sector employees' recruitment, selection, and advancement will be based on their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Most states and local governments use written and/or oral competitive examinations as the primary source to meet this requirement. The 5 CFR 900.603 also speaks to equitable compensation, training of employees to guarantee high performance, retaining of employees based on their performance, assuring of fair treatment of applicants, and ensuring of employees' protection for political reasons.

In addition, pursuant to the 5 CFR 900.603 (National Archives and Records Administration, 2024), the requirements for authenticating the standards must include a civil service merit system when authenticated by a state or local government. OPM responds to requests regarding implementing the regulations of the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) of 1970. Therefore, the IPA and the 5 CFR 900.603 regulations apply when states and local governments seek to establish a civil service merit personnel system to receive federal funds. Therefore, the IPA does not prescribe a particular staffing method.

According to OPM (2019), the state or local government can determine the most suitable staffing method; however, "regardless of the staffing method chosen, the state or local agency [governments] must certify that it is using a merit personnel system that meets the standards outlined in 5 CFR 900.603" (OPM, 2019 para. 1). Therefore, states and local governments must use a civil service merit system and demonstrate that they

use civil service of competitive examinations to staff their respective government to receive federal funding.

Purpose of State and Local Government Competitive Examinations

The Pendleton Act of 1883 was founded on British precedents and established the civil service merit system rules that included “1) competitive examinations, 2) relative security of tenure, and 3) political neutrality” (Van Riper, 1958, p. 100), except for those exempted officers who were appointed, and employees of the legislative and judicial branches. Further, Light (1997) argued that “historians celebrate passage of the Pendleton Civil Service Act as a signal moment in the march of scientific management. But is also involved a war on waste, a bit of watchful eye, and the ultimate hope for liberation management” (p. 18). Moreover, Kettl (2015) stated that supporters of a civil service merit system in government devoted themselves to killing the spoils system and introduced civil service merit based competitive examinations to reduce nepotism. However, Kettl noted that civil service merit system examinations were only appropriate to the extent that the tests incorporated knowledge assumed to be possessed by all Americans.

In addition, Kettl (2015) argued that civil service merit competitive examinations involve more than holding an examination by title. Civil service merit competitive examinations require job postings and public announcements. Wilson (1989) stated that “the faith in the power of rules to prevent or correct the failing of government is ancient and deeply rooted” (p. 335).

According to Pfiffner (2004), in traditional public administration, government personnel are hired through a civil service merit system designed by the state or local

government personnel agency and often enacted by law. A civil service merit system is designed to prevent partisan political interference in policy implementation. Pfiffner stated that “the hallmark of such a system is neutral competence, achieved through hiring the most qualified workers for the positions. Partisan neutrality is achieved through rules that protect workers from partisan political pressure and prevent them from actively participating in partisan political campaigns” (p. 6). Wilson (1989) highlighted that “rules have risks and teach you to be sensitive to the fact that the American political system is biased toward solving bureaucratic problems by issuing rules” (p. 344). Given these biases, Wilson furthered his arguments by mentioning that these rules often contribute to an unmet need or a bureaucratic failure.

Tools for Hiring, Promotion, and Retention

States and local governments vary in their approaches to the essential components of the traditional civil service merit systems and the use of competitive examinations to recruit, hire, promote, and retain public sector employees (Wiesen et al., 1990). Despite these variations, Sundell (2014) discussed how there are two essential aspects of the traditional civil service merit system competitive examinations: “1) hiring based on objective criteria, and 2) rewarding competence over political patronage” (p. 442). However, Wiesen et al. (1990) argued that civil service merit system competitive examinations do not consider reasonableness because applications for the examination may outnumber the available positions. In addition, the authors expanded on civil service merit system competitive examinations for recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention and how these appointments are made from scores on that particular examination (Wiesen et al., 1990). Moreover, cutoff scores vary by each state and local government as

to who qualifies to be on the employment lists (Wiesen et al., 1990). Wiesen et al. discussed how the time between the civil service merit system competitive examination can take 4 to 5 months, sometimes even longer. According to Osborne and Hutchinson (2004), in “traditional bureaucracies, the incentives are clear: keep your head down, do what you did last year (stay “low” and go “slow”), and you can keep your job and get an annual pay increase” (p. 189). The NPM is designed to turn those incentives on their head.

Rule of Three

The rule of three is a complex and cumbersome policy that is difficult to understand, let alone administer. Most state and local governments that work within a civil service merit system are subject to the rule of three. The purpose of the rule of three is to take the highest three exam scores and hire and/or promote a candidate on the competitive examination scoring list. In other words, candidates who have passed are placed on an eligible list in descending score order after an examination. Candidates are selected from the eligible list using the rule of three. The rule of three means that agencies count down the first three people on the list, and these three people, plus anyone else at the third person’s score, are the eligibles they can consider filling positions (NYS, Career Mobility Office, n.d.).

Literature is replete with the rule of three. F. J. Thompson (2003) published several scholarly articles that identified problems with civil service merit systems and suggested reforms. Savas and Ginsburg (1973) discussed how public sector agencies are constrained by civil service rules, specifically regarding the rule of three. They further discussed how when managers want to hire a candidate who scored low on their

respective state and local government examinations, agencies often take higher scoring candidates out of interest for the position to reach or hire and /or promote a person who has a lower score but has the needed experience. If the top scorers are interested in the position and cannot be persuaded, the state or local government agency is forced to hire those top three scorers. The incumbent with a lower score but who has the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) will be passed over. The agency will, therefore, have to hire no one or someone with a background not congruent with the job duties, even if the candidate desired was only a few points down the civil service merit competitive examination list. Moreover, Savas and Ginsburg argued that promotions within civil service merit systems can be more accurately described as a seniority system. Savas and Ginsburg (1973, as cited in F. J. Thompson, 2003) further asked, “Is it better for the public to promote an ‘insider’ who scores 70 than to hire an ‘outsider’ who scores a 99?” (p. 93).

Classification Standards

Shafritz (1973), argued that classification standards used by civil service merit systems, which are job descriptions with associated duties for a myriad of job titles for public sector jobs, are used as management tools to determine what different government titles and positions candidates are responsible for carrying out and are counterproductive to the agency’s mission. According to Ban (1995), civil service merit systems classification standards are designed to rationalize what has become a patchwork of rules and position descriptions. As a result, the responsibility to uphold classification standards within a civil service merit system can quickly become an emphasis on process and compliance with formal rules and regulations. Savas and Ginsburg (1973), as cited in

F. J. Thompson, 2003) stated that civil service merit system classification standards are very narrow because they make it easier to produce a civil service examination “specific enough to give up appearance of relevance and fairness” (p. 89).

Furthermore, Savas and Ginsburg (1973), argued that the recruitment process for civil service merit positions is arbitrary and ineffective because of civil service merit system classification standards and examinations. As a result, managers devote much effort and time to bypassing the civil service merit system regulations to hire such recruits from outside the system. This results in a shadow workforce in government.

Shadow Workforce

Savas and Ginsburg (1973) explained that to skirt the civil service merit systems’ competitive examination lists, state and local governments hire a shadow workforce, or consultants, to do the job of state and local government staff when managers cannot hire from a civil service merit systems competitive examination list for a few reasons. First, this may be because the examination list scores are exhausted (all eligible candidates have been hired or are not interested). As a result, no one can be hired from that list until the next civil service merit systems examination for that title. Second, hiring a shadow workforce is due to an undesirable civil service merit systems examination list because the examination scores did not result in suitable candidates. Third, J. R. Thompson (2021) argued that list blockers, caused by the rule of three, contributes to hiring a shadow workforce.

To maneuver around the complexities of a civil service merit system, consultants are hired because they are not subject to civil service competitive examinations within a merit system. Therefore, managers can hire whom they want without civil service merit

system constraints. F. J. Thompson (2003) stated that the high reliance on hiring consultants from the private sector to provide public sector services is reason enough for states and local governments to rid themselves of civil service merit systems. Mills (2010) stated “Contractors and consultants are integral to the business of today’s government and will be in perpetuity – or as long as our republic endures” (p, 178).

Ban (1995) stated that although a decentralized shadow workforce may appear as a good solution, it can make life harder for managers. Managers need to be concerned about the values of not only the staff hired through a civil service merit system but also the values of contractors and ensure they are aligned. In addition, because of the decentralization, the personnel office may increase the inclination of line managers to see the personnel process as someone else’s responsibility and not central to the personnel office.

Moreover, F. J. Thompson (2003) stated that shadow workforces also raise concerns about a new form of patronage: favoritism to contractors based on their support of elected officials and their influence on state agencies. Ideally, private sector consultants for the public sector should be hired and posted so that all can apply. However, according to F. J. Thompson, this does not always happen. Instead, state and local governments rely on sole-source contracting or private firms with which the state or local government already has contracts. Sole-source contracting does not require procurement. In addition, F. J. Thompson stated that “the efforts to find the most competent and efficient contractor can also founder on the shoals of pinstripe patronage—the desire of elected officeholders to reward their supporters and punish their opponents” (p. 58).

Labor Unions

One cannot speak of public sector employment without mentioning the unions' major role in protecting civil servants and often hand-tying managers. Initially, civil service merit system rules were the only way to protect public sector employees from elected officials, especially if their party took over the executive branch. According to Osborne and Hutchinson (2004),

When most civil service [merit] systems were developed, public employees were not unionized ... Today, we have three layers of protection, and the result is often gridlock. Managers have trouble hiring the talent they need because the centralized hiring process is so bureaucratic and slow. Thousands of job classifications divide employees into absurdly narrow categories and pay grades frustrating managers' attempts to move or reward them with higher pay. (p. 256)

In addition, Osborne and Hutchinson (2004) argued that pay is determined by longevity and not by performance within each job classification. This can serve as a crutch for state and local government employees to stay and to get raises every year regardless of productivity and effort. Savas and Ginsburg (1973) argued that the biggest reason for significant reform of civil service merit systems is that collective bargaining has distorted the civil service merit system even more.

Moreover, when good employees reach the top of their pay grade, further raises are impossible without a promotion. Even firing public sector employees is nearly impossible, and managers often avoid the battle with the union and its myriad of rules and appeals. Osborne and Hutchinson (2004) argued that when layoffs occur, employees

with seniority because of longevity can bump those without seniority, causing massive confusion, frustration, and discontent.

Discontent With Civil Service Merit Systems and Competitive Government Examinations

Literature on civil service merit system competitive examinations and their impact on employee recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention is scant. What is clear is that the practice of requiring civil service merit system competitive examinations for advancement may inhibit the use of a transformational change leadership style. Within state and local government civil service merit systems, state and local governments may use standardized and/or oral examinations for promotional opportunities. Greenan et al. (2019) studied oral examinations and found that they can lead to gender and place of birth inequalities. In addition, the National Academy of Public Administration (2020) found that in six states, heads of state government departments had difficulty working within a civil service merit system and, as a result, found ways to manipulate the system to promote high-performing employees. There are additional negative consequences of working within a civil service merit system. Lavigna and Hays (2004) argued that competitive examinations and arbitrary civil service merit system rules restrict the hiring choices of managers and supervisors.

F. J. Thompson (2003) reported that HRM reformers have increasingly found that the civil service merit system personnel systems undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of the state and local government, and competitive examinations contribute to this growing problem. In addition, F. J. Thompson argued that HRM reform of government personnel systems should be deregulated and decentralized without returning

to the spoils system. Finally, Southworth (2000) proposed adding performance assessments into an examination score that would increase the validity and utility of civil service merit system examinations dramatically.

Johnson and Lewis (2020) stated that the effect of employee quality on civil service merit based competitive examinations offer little evidence of the impacts of civil service merit system competitive examinations relative to the many hiring authority that have increased in recent decades. Further, the authors argued that although alternative hiring methods have emerged, negative and positive effects on the overall qualifications and quality of the public sector are not entirely known (Johnson & Lewis, 2020).

Kettl (2016) addressed the broken civil service merit system and stated that the bipartisan Pendleton Act of 1883 is disintegrating. Kettl noted that the traditional civil service merit system is not in tune with the job's duties. Further, Kettl (2015) asked, "What kinds of civil service system do we need to equip the government with the skills it needs to deliver the services citizens demand?" (p. 422). As the public sector struggles to hire the right candidates through a cumbersome civil service merit system hiring process, "there is little strategic workforce planning to understand what people they need to begin with. The result is a growing collection of government's performance problems" (Kettl, 2015, p. 423). Finally, with the relationship to the baby boomer retirements, Kettl argued that governments have not been engaged in the fundamental question of how best to hire in the public sector in light of these retirements.

Civil Service Merit Systems and Competitive Government Examinations

Civil service merit systems used by most states and local governments may mediate the effects of public sector recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention

dovetailing into succession planning. Civil service merit system standards are specified in the Code of Federal Regulations 5 CFR Subpart F Section 900.603 (National Archives and Records Administration, 2024). The code states that employees may advance on merit, or KSAs. Most states and local governments who have a civil service merit system use written and/or oral competitive examinations as the primary source to meet this requirement.

In addition, pursuant to the 5 CFR 900.603 (National Archives and Records Administration, 2024), the requirements for establishing the standards must be included in a civil service merit personnel system when certified by a state or local government. OPM responds to requests regarding implementing the regulations of the IPA of 1970. Therefore, the IPA and the 5 CFR 900.603 regulations apply when states and local governments seek to establish a civil service merit personnel system to receive federal funds. Therefore, the IPA does not prescribe a particular staffing method because according to the Federal Register, the state or local government has the discretion to determine the most appropriate staffing method. However, “regardless of the staffing method chosen, the state or local agency [government] must certify that it is using a merit personnel system that meets the standards outlined in 5 CFR 900.603” (OPM, 2019, Supplementary information, para. 2; see also National Archives and Records Administration, 2019). Thus, states and local governments must use a civil service merit system and demonstrate that they use competitive examinations to staff their respective government to receive federal funding.

Discontent With Civil Service Merit Systems and Competitive Government Examinations

Literature on civil service merit systems competitive government examinations and their impact on recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention and how they affect succession planning is scant. What is clear is that the practice of requiring a civil service merit systems competitive examination for advancement may inhibit the use of a transformational change leadership style. Within state and local government civil service merit systems, states and local governments may use standardized oral or written examinations for hiring and promotional opportunities. Greenan et al. (2019) studied the oral examinations and found that these can lead to gender and place of birth inequalities. In addition, the National Academy of Public Administration (2020) found that within six states, heads of state government departments have difficulty working within a civil service merit system, and as a result, found ways to manipulate the system to promote high-performing employees. There are additional negative consequences of working within a civil service merit system. Lavigna and Hays (2004) argued that the arbitrary civil service merit system rules and competitive examinations contribute to the lack of managerial discretion and employee retention. The authors also argued that the “tortuous examination procedures” need a more streamlined approach (Lavigna & Hays, 2004, p. 243).

F. J. Thompson (2003) reported that HRM reformers have increasingly found that the government personnel systems undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of the government, and competitive examinations contribute to this growing problem. In addition, F. J. Thompson argued that HRM reform of government personnel systems

should be deregulated and decentralized without returning to the spoils system. Finally, Southworth (2000) proposed adding performance assessments into an examination score to increase the validity and utility of civil service merit system examinations dramatically.

Even though the development of the civil service merit system is pivotal in the history of the United States, scholars have argued about the legitimacy of the civil service merit system today (Kettl, 2015). All 50 states have their own civil service and merit traditions. Other than Georgia, which eliminated its civil service merit system in 1996, all states, local governments, and the federal government control whether or not changes to their civil service merit system are needed (Gossett, 2003). According to Brewer and Kellough (2016), although the reinventing government movement prompted many states and local governments to rethink their civil service merit system, removing the barriers to a high-performance workforce is intensified by powerful labor unions, complicating any governmental change. Kettl (2016) further argued that “there is a troubling sense that the gap between government’s promises and its performance is growing. As the problems multiply, the costs escalate” (p. 59). Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) contended that the “implementation difficulties can be mitigated but we urge continued skepticism when anyone suggests that inherent features of political life can be summarily abolished” (p. 162).

In addition, civil service merit system competitive examinations do not consistently engender transformational change leaders, so public sector managers must work with the staff and resources produced by a civil service merit system (Borins, 2014). O’Neill and Nalbandian (2018) found that in public sector organizations, there is a

need to develop “better structures that facilitate translating leadership to results and more opportunities for upcoming leaders to engage in guided development, which will lead to public sector employee retention” (p. 314).

According to Sherk (2021), many state civil service merit systems have procedures similar to those of the federal government for removing state employees with for-cause removal protections and appeals to an external administrative agency. Consequently, these procedures have also made removing state government employees difficult. Sherk stated, “Some states have addressed this problem by ending removal restrictions and moving to at-will employment. For example:

- Arizona enacted legislation in 2012 making most state government employees at-will;
- Florida removed employment protections for senior state executives in 2001;
- Georgia placed state employees hired after July 1, 1996, in a new civil service system without employment protections; that system now covers almost all Georgia state government employees;
- Indiana increased the number of at-will employees in state government in 2011 while reducing the importance of seniority for those retaining employment protections;
- Missouri enacted legislation in 2018 making the vast majority of state government employees functionally at will; and
- Texas abolished its centralized civil service system in 1985. (p. 12)

According to Sherk, these states continue to operate effective and professional EAW personnel systems. Sherk pointed out that moving to an EAW personnel system would

restore the Pendleton Act's vision for merit service. America's civil service system need not "seal up incompetency, negligence, [and] insubordination" (Sherk, 2021, p. 12).

Proponents and Opponents of Civil Service Merit System Reform

Aberbach and Rockman (2000), proponents of civil service merit system reform, emphasized that government at all levels is broken and needs to be fixed. Furthermore, Aberbach and Rockman stated that the only way to fix the broken government is to introduce various private-sector strategies into public administration. Erdreich (1997) reported that only 20% of government employee surveys revealed that their agency promotes staff with integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest. Moreover, Getha-Taylor (2019) argued that public sector employees feel underpaid because of the civil service merit system and competitive examinations and, as a result, public sector agencies cannot retain high performers.

Furthermore, Gossett (2003) pointed to Georgia's civil service merit system reform in 1996, by which the state eliminated its merit system, and how revolutionary this reform has allowed the state to hire qualified workers and inspire transformational change leaders. Osborne and Hutchinson (2004) recognized that:

Staff at all levels of government are creatures, or prisoners, of their internal systems. Traditional budgeting, accounting, personnel, procurement, and audit systems are nests of red tape that tie employees up in knots. Public leaders have to modernize and streamline these systems. The payoff is dramatic savings. (p. 11)

Despite many existing models, government reform at all levels is difficult because few understand this kind of reform. Many in charge of these systems interpret every challenge as an attack on the norms of fairness, equity, lowest cost, and merit-based

decisions. Finally, Kobrak (1993) argued that “thanks to civil service reforms, budget increases, rising educational levels, and growing pressure for specialization, state bureaucracies acquired greater experience and expertise. They are more adept at problem-solving than ever before and arguably more deserving of discretion” (p. 417).

Opponents, such as Beer et al. (2004) and Chandler (2016), have specified that although civil service merit system reformers want system change, scholarly literature has not addressed how this can be accomplished considering the ever-changing political culture within each state. Moreover, Park and Liang (2020) argued that they found clear patterns in their research, concluding that “merit-based practices and diversity management efforts have independent positive impacts on the performance of federal and state agencies” (p. 213). Wilson (1989) claimed that government bureaus are less likely than private agencies to operate efficiently. There are three reasons for this:

Government executives are less able than their private counterparts to define an efficient course of action; public executives have weaker incentives than private executives; and public executives have less authority than the private sector to compose an efficient course of action. (Wilson, 1989, pp. 349–350)

According to Osborne and Hutchinson (2004), if the path to improving things were not filled with nonsense rules, more people might rise to the challenge. Citizens are cynical, and the media is even worse. The question then becomes, “who” in their right mind would want the job of a public sector manager/leader that is so rule-bound managers/leaders cannot exercise any discretion?

HRM Reform

Although the NPM movement consists of much more than HRM reform and the more flexible EAW personnel system, this study focused on the extent PSHRA professionals who worked within a state or local government merit civil service system or within a state or local government EAW system agreed that their personnel system is effective with recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention while being able to effective in succession planning. With the NPM theoretical framework, and consequently EAW, emphasizing flexibility and weakening or eliminating traditional civil service merit protections, the question becomes, “Are state and local governments that use an EAW personnel system more effective in recruiting, hiring, promoting, and retaining employees while being more effective in succession planning than those who work within a merit system?”

Windows of Opportunity

Kingdon (2003) infamously wrote about windows of opportunity and their importance within policy systems. Recognizing government problems is sometimes sufficient to gain a subject place on the policy agenda. Windows of opportunity open within policy systems because of changes in the political stream (administration, ideology, etc.). According to Kingdon, “Once the window opens, it does not stay open long; an idea’s time comes, but it also passes” (p. 169). He further explained that separate streams of politics, problems, and policy streams come together at critical times, so windows of opportunity do not last long. Kingdon argued that “policy windows are opened either by the appearance of compelling problems or by happening in the political stream. Hence, there are ‘problem windows’ and ‘political windows’” (p. 194).

Moreover, Kingdon (2003) described the distinction between the agenda and the alternatives: “The governmental agenda is set in the problems or political streams, and the alternatives are generated in the policy stream” (p. 194). Aberbach and Rockman (2000) supported Kingdon (2003) as they described his policies that apply to the streams of management reform and why some are chosen. Further, Aberbach and Rockman (2000) claimed that “bureaucracy is very much about power; it is thus eminently political (p. 3).

How Barriers to Advancement Effect Retention—

Lack of Employee Empowerment

The literature is replete with examples of how employee empowerment affects retention. According to Alnaqbi (2011), employees appear less committed to their respective organizations in today’s work environment mainly because of the lack of empowerment in the workplace. Kalita (2021) stated that employees who are more empowered by mastering their jobs tend to display higher organizational effectiveness. Kalita also argued that because employees are more likely to change careers when unhappy, “organizational leaders should make a direct effort to ensure their employees are empowered so the organization can catapult itself to the highest levels of managerial excellence” (p. 5).

According to Todnem et al. (2012), in the world people live in today, leaders are rewarded for putting their egos and self-interests ahead of others. Alnaqbi (2011) focused on how an employer’s HR offices can satisfy employees’ needs by providing training, rewards, equality, and benefits to foster employee retention. Alnaqbi further argued that it is clear that changes in HR personnel system practices and styles that focus on employee

empowerment are necessary to ensure employee satisfaction, which in turn contributes to employee retention.

Caldwell (1978) argued that merit gets in the way of public sector employees' motivation. Caldwell also stated that public sector employees must be allowed to participate in goal-setting activities and be recognized for their hard work. He further stated that public sector motivation is decreased because of civil service competitive examinations inherent in any merit system.

Kobrak (1993) maintained that change agents must cope with the civil service merit system:

The challenge is simultaneously to facilitate the development of a system that will provide sufficient autonomy for managers to pursue agency goals and somehow achieve an appropriate balance with these other values that remain deeply embedded in the personnel process. Too often, historically, the system has tilted in the direction of one or another of these competing values that can, if carried to the extreme, become an impediment of getting things done. (p. 175)

EAW and Ethics

According to Green et al. (2006), politicians and managers are changing the nature of public service, and the ramifications of these changes need to be studied. Green et al. stated that seemingly simple and straightforward measures sometimes betray the best intentions:

The expansion of at-will employment presents this kind of danger. Although it is hardly a fad at this point, at-will employment fits all too comfortably with the spirit of the times. Its promise may seem great to those under pressure to get

results with declining resources, but the legal, political, and managerial factors pose more problems than promise. (p. 321)

Moreover, Green et al. argued that public employees have consistently been denied meaningful market-style incentives throughout American history, so why operate on the pretense that the situation can be reversed with the next reform?

On the contrary, Hijal-Moghrabi et al. (2017) argued that an ethical environment in EAW jurisdictions can improve performance even though EAW is said to fundamentally transform public servants' terms and conditions of employment and modify and even disrupt employment relationships. Further, Hijal-Moghrabi et al. discovered three critical findings regarding ethics and EAW:

First, it establishes the ethical environment as one of the factors influencing organizational performance. Second, it contributes to the EAW literature by partially confirming the assumption that eliminating job protection enhances performance. Third, this study provides empirical evidence that EAW jurisdictions can still develop and maintain ethical environments – an issue that has so far remained inconclusive in the relevant literature. (p. 1366)

The Importance of Exit and Voice

When organizations fail to overcome retention barriers, employees use exit and voice to register dissatisfaction. Hirschman (1970) illustrated how exit and voice are used by people discontented with their jobs. Hirschman defined voice as any attempt to change, rather than escape from, an objectionable state of affairs (p. 30). According to Hirschman, voice is used rather than exit when a form of loyalty exists. The exit option

can sharply reduce the likelihood that the voice option will be taken up widely and effectively.

Moreover, Hirschman (1970) argued that exit has been shown to expel voice. Public sector agencies have many exits between attrition and retirement (Kettl, 2016). Hirschman (1970) also illustrated how voice is used when employees are comfortable conversing with their manager about what they want to change to improve their performance and be more content at work. Bussin (2018) noted that scholars have widely cited Hirschman's (1970) publication, which still applies today.

Cooper (2018) empirically examined the relationship between civil service merit system recruitment and employee voice. Cooper conjectured two reasons civil service merit system recruitment may positively affect employee voice. His first reason was that by isolating bureaucrats' careers from political considerations, civil service merit recruitment may reduce employees' fear that voicing a dissenting opinion will negatively impact their careers. His second reason was that "in addition to the first mechanism, merit recruitment may also positively affect employee voice by signaling to bureaucrats that they are politically neutral officials, and as such, their professional role includes the provision of objective and candid advice" (Cooper, 2018, p. 722). In conclusion, Cooper stated that among all occupational groups, the more public servants believe that civil service merit recruitment is high, the less they fear the possibility of reprisal for expressing a dissenting opinion to those above them.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this quantitative, nonexperimental, and comparative study was new public management (NPM), also known as the reinventing

government movement. As mentioned, NPM focuses on enhancing and improving public sector performance. Borins (2014) argued that “within the social sciences, replication tends to be endorsed in theory more often than it is embraced in practice” (p. 2). Borins further argued that scholars and practitioners want to replicate studies done by others but that this kind of work can be less meaningful than one that generates a new discovery. Because this study did not replicate any other scholarly work or revisit other scholars’ data, the researcher was able to use their own methodology and provide their interpretation of the data.

Kettl (2000) summarized the goal of the NPM approach as aiming to “remedy a pathology of traditional bureaucracy that is hierarchically structured, and authority driven” and “to root out authority-driven hierarchical systems” (pp. 30–33). He summarized the six core characteristics of the NPM approach as productivity, marketization, service orientation, decentralization, policy orientation, and accountability for results (Kettl, 2000). F. J. Thompson (2003) observed that the NPM approach borrowed primarily from business administration literature, calling for more managerial freedom to use resources, focusing on results rather than inputs, and relying more on the private sector for service delivery.

Wang et al. (2020) argued that other factors influence employee retention in the public sector, including but not limited to civil service merit system competitive examinations, compensation, competition with the private sector, inability to advance in the workplace, gender, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and ethnicity. IPMA-HR (2019), renamed the Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) in January 2023, found that state government agencies gain much information about employee retention through exit

interviews. Of interest, IPMA-HR found that just 33% of the small state agencies have completed employee engagement and job satisfaction surveys.

According to Pfiffner (2004), the NPM approach rejects measuring inputs and using performance measures to evaluate programs and management. Accountability for resources is less critical than accomplishing goals at a given cost. Creative managers should be given the broadest flexibility to use the resources to accomplish programmatic missions. Their success will be measured by their performance in achieving goals rather than carefully accounting for the resources (inputs) used.

In addition, Pfiffner (2004) stated that the NPM favors loosening the strictures of the traditional model would give lower-level managers more flexibility to use their own information and allow for more creativity and flexibility in order to achieve new efficiencies and better customer service. It would give lower-level managers more flexibility to use their own information and judgment to make decisions (that is, “let managers manage”). (p. 9)

Moreover, Pfiffner (2004) stated that NPM would encourage managers to take risks and be more entrepreneurial. It would achieve accountability by measuring outputs rather than by monitoring processes. States and local governments with large public sectors encourage privatizing functions, and states and local governments with smaller public sectors encourage contracting with private organizations to provide public goods and services.

Historical Significance of Transformational Leadership

Weber (1946) was the first scholar to discuss charismatic leadership. Wilson’s (1989) writing focused on Max Weber’s theory on public bureaucracies, viewing from

the bottom up in a government organization. Wilson also focused on overregulating public bureaucracies and the negative ramifications for employees and public bureaucracies. Finally, Wilson examined the differences between the private and the public sectors.

Despite its importance, Weber's (1946) work on charisma lay dormant until the mid-1970s. House (1976) further developed Weber's (1946) concept of charismatic leadership. Bass (1985) built on charismatic leadership studies and laid the groundwork for transformational change leadership. Bass framed the foundation of transformational change leadership as the four I's: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Bass and Avolio (1994), leading researchers in transformational change, claimed that charismatic leadership, as created by Max Weber, is a component of transformational change leadership. Judge et al. (2006) added, "Thus, they view transformational leadership as a broader construct than charisma" (p. 205).

What Is Transformational Change Leadership and

Why Is It Needed With EAW?

To deepen the understanding of transformational change leadership's characteristics, this section's introduction contrasts the traits of transformational change and transactional leaders. Transformational change leadership is distinctly different than transactional leadership. According to Bass (1985), "Transactional leadership focuses on the interactions between leaders and followers" (p. 42). According to McCleskey (2014), "Transactional [change] leadership focuses on the completion of tasks and not on the individual" and "fast, simple transactions among multiple leaders and followers, each

moving from transaction to transaction in search of gratification” (p. 121). On the other hand, Bass and Bass (2008) argued that transformational change leaders convince their followers to surpass their self-interest in the workplace while enriching their subordinate’s level of need. Bass and Bass stated that “the level of need is based on Maslow (1954) hierarchy from lower-level concerns for safety and security to higher-level needs for achievement and self-actualization” (p. 619).

According to Bass (1997), “Of the different leadership styles presented in the literature, transformational [change] leadership is characterized by envisioning, enabling, and empowering employees” (p. 21). Transformational change leadership focuses on building positive relationships between the leader and the subordinates. The relationship between the two is not forced such as under the command-and-control management model. Tupper and Ellis (2022) found that the command-and-control model contributes to the lack of trust, discourages workers from using their skills, and prevents workers from making autonomous decisions. The command-and-control model is archaic, and transformational change leaders make it their mission to influence relationships positively, embrace emotional intelligence, and allow for autonomy. Transformational change leaders who motivate their employees through charisma and persuasion, as characterized by transformational change leadership, positively affect productivity and well-being (Dughera, 2022; Tupper & Ellis, 2022).

Four I’s of Transformational Leadership

Bass (1997), a champion of transformational change leadership, incorporated the four I’s into transformational change leadership. According to McCleskey (2014), the first is idealized influence. This is the ability to model positive leadership skills that

employees want to emulate. In addition, transformational change leaders impress their employees and subordinates through their behavior. The second is inspirational motivation. This is the ability to bring shared meaning and a challenge to subordinates. The key is that the transformational change leaders must have enthusiasm and optimism so that subordinates want to follow them. The third is intellectual stimulation. This requires that the leader be open without fear of criticism to increase the self-efficacy of subordinates. The fourth is individualized consideration. This involves the transformational change leader acting as a coach or mentor so that subordinates may reach their full potential. Working off of Bass's (1997) publication, McCleskey (2014) stated that these four components, when combined, create transformational change leaders.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The literature presented multiple theoretical frameworks dating back to the 1940s that provide employers with insights into employee retention. For example, Alshmemri et al. (2017) stated that in "1959, Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman published the two-factor model of work motivation and developed the motivation-hygiene theory, which was influenced by Maslow's hierarchy of needs" (p. 12). Hygiene factors include company policies, relationships with managers and supervisors, and coworkers (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Maslow's (1943, as cited in Basic, 2018) hierarchy of needs theory describes "a person's motivation and progression from basic physiological needs to the highest level of need, self-actualization" (p. 44). Moreover, Gardner (1977) found that no single validity test exists for Herzberg's two-factor motivation-hygiene theory, and different hypotheses should be tested in various ways.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory

Further expanding upon Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Basic (2018) stated that "in 1987, Herzberg developed a dual-factor motivational theory connecting self-actualization and meaningful work" (p. 45). House (1976) stated,

In 1959, Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman reported research findings that suggested that man has two sets of needs: his need as an animal to avoid pain, and his need as a human to grow psychologically. These findings led them to advance a "dual factor" theory of motivation. (p. 369)

Alshmemri et al. (2017) explained that the central concept of Herzberg's theory is the difference between the two factors: motivation and hygiene. According to Alshmemri et al., these "motivation factors include achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and the possibility for growth. Hygiene factors include company policies and administration, relationship with supervisors, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and salary" (p. 15).

According to Borins (2014), civil service merit system competitive examinations do not consistently engender transformational change leaders, so public sector managers are to move forward with the staff and resources produced by a civil service merit system. O'Neill and Nalbandian (2018) found that in public sector organizations, there is a "need to develop better structures that facilitate translating leadership to results and more opportunities for upcoming leaders to engage in guided development, which will lead to public sector employee retention" (p. 314).

Job Embeddedness Theory

Mitchell et al. (2001) pioneered job embeddedness theory to explain why people stay at their jobs. This theory is different from Herzberg's theory because it has a slightly different focus on employee retention. Holtom et al. (2006) stated that job embeddedness occurs in various ways related to both on- and off-the-job factors. Further, Holtom et al. (2006) argued,

Critical aspects of job embeddedness are the extent to which the job is similar to, or fits with the other aspects in their life, the extent to which the person has links to other people or activities, and what they would give up by leaving—the perks, benefits and other aspects of the job they value, such as a safe or pleasant work environment. These dimensions are called fit, links, and sacrifice. (p. 319)

In addition, Holtom et al. further explained that job embeddedness affects employee retention and consists of two subfactors: on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness.

According to Steindórsdóttir et al. (2021), job embeddedness refers to how committed employees are to their workplace. Steindórsdóttir et al. found that when achievement criteria are used and employees are allowed to master their work, they are more likely to be embedded in it. Moreover, Steindórsdóttir et al. found that autonomy and competence are equally crucial for job embeddedness.

What Is Public Sector Succession Planning and Why Is It Important?

Ibarra (2016) stated that because of an aging workforce, all levels of government are experiencing a brain drain that is placing their organizations at a critical juncture: The need for experienced and seasoned employees has never been greater, while those are the very workers who are most likely to be departing in

the very near future. Governments must get serious about succession planning.

(para. 2)

Succession planning is a top workforce issue for state and local governments. However, Fulla (2024) claimed that despite the dire need for succession planning, many state and local governments have not developed formal succession plans. Accordingly, states and local governments do not prioritize succession planning.

Succession Planning Statistics

Young et al. (2022) found in their study on state and local governments that the most significant change from last year is in dealing with the challenge of turnover, which has risen from 44%, identifying it as an important priority in 2021 to 67% in 2022. Leadership development declined (74% important in 2021 to 65% in 2022), while workforce succession planning remained at 56% important. Another important priority has dropped over many years. (p. 22)

Ash and Rahn (2020) put together a state policy toolkit guide (hereafter referred to as “toolkit”) to prepare for the current and future state workforce. This toolkit was created with the guidance of 28 states and 150 international and national experts. The toolkit illustrates 10 transformational pathways, divided into three objectives, for states and local governments to build into their workforce infrastructure. In addition, Ash and Rahn (2020) stated that policy options assist each state’s future workforce that can “range from specific programs targeted at institutions to large-scale transformations within and across systems” (p. 25).

Mission Square Research Institute has surveyed PSHRA and National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) professionals since 2009. In a publication of the

State and Local Government Workforce Survey 2023, Mission Square Research Institute surveyed 240 state and local government HR managers between March 10 and April 25, 2023. Its survey data revealed the following:

- 17% of governments reported their full-time staffing increased by 5% or more, while 6% said staffing decreased by 5% or more.
- 13% more governments report employees accelerating retirement plans than posting them.
- 55% see their compensation as being competitive, while 89% see their benefits that way. Relatedly, 62% report providing broad-based pay increases.
- Only 30% feel their employees are prepared for retirement. (Mission Square Research Institute, 2023, p. 3)

In addition, Mission Square Research Institute (2023) highlighted the following:

- 29% dropped degree requirements for some positions.
- 9% are offering on-the-spot conditional job offers.
- 9% have mobile apps for submitting and tracking applications.
- Hiring bonuses are being offered either broadly (5%) or in a targeted manager (29%), but only 16% are analyzing data on their total cost and effectiveness as a recruiting tool.
- 36% report an increase in time to hire, with 51% saying they frequently have to re-open recruitments because there were insufficient qualified candidates.
- 51% see salary compression as an important issue. (p. 3)

In April 2024, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics published its most recent data on the U.S. workforce, including public and private sector vacancies, hires, and

separations. For February 2024 (preliminary data), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) reported 773,000 vacancies in state and local government but only 336,000 hires. In the federal government, there were 128,000 vacancies but only 44,000 hires. The private sector had 7,855,000 vacancies and 5,438,000 hires. The ratio of 7.73:1.68 vacancies to hires in state and local government exceeds the ratio of 7.9:5.4 in the private sector. These numbers continue a long-term trend of a large gap between vacancies and government hires. These numbers strengthen the serious challenges government faces in hiring and retaining talent. In a LinkedIn post, Bob Lavigna (personal communication, October 9, 2024) asked,

How should government respond? Unfortunately, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. Some suggestions I often write and speak about:

- Brand and aggressively as opportunities to make a difference in the lives of the people government serves.
- Where it makes sense, eliminate arbitrary degree and experience requirements.
- Deliver a positive employment experience—the moments that matter for employees—to build engagement and therefore create a great place to work that will attract and retain talent.
- Collect and act on data to assess whether the organization is indeed a great place to work. This includes conducting employee surveys to understand what employees feel good about and what needs to improve.
- Use technology to generate critical workforce data, deliver customized experiences for individual employees, and improve operational efficiency.

Equally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) analyzed employment data and shared its projections through 2060. Toossi (2016) demonstrated how the share of 16- to 24-year-olds in the labor force is expected to decrease from 2015–2060. Furthermore, as baby boomers age, the 55-years-and-older age group will become more prominent. Toossi asserted that this will continue until most baby boomers retire and leave the labor force.

According to Clark and Ritter (2020), baby boomers, or those born between 1946 and 1964, have exceeded the age of retirement or, if not, are ready to retire. Clark and Ritter pointed out that the “percentage of the labor force aged 55 or older almost doubled in the last two decades from 12.4% in 1998 to 23.1% in 2018” (p. 3). The authors project this trend to continue.

These findings and conclusions show that the staffing numbers continue a long-term trend of a large gap between vacancies and hires within government. In addition, they reinforce the critical challenges government faces in attracting and retaining talent. Succession planning, therefore, should be at the forefront and of concern within all three levels of government.

Tie-In of State Personnel Systems

Wilkerson (2007) argued that public sector succession planning lags behind the private sector because of tenure, political leadership, personnel system rules, and lack of resources and focus. According to Marrelli (2022), ambiguous funding affects succession planning. In addition, Marrelli contended the following:

The Federal Merit System Principles and the Prohibited Personnel Practices established in Title 5 of the U.S. Code substantially limit flexibility in employee

development and promotions, both key aspects of succession planning. For example, the merit system principle, “Recruit, select, and advance on merit after fair and open competition,” prohibits the common succession planning practice of senior leaders personally identifying promising employees, providing them with special opportunities for development, and then promoting them into critical positions. This approach does not allow for fair and open competition and is thus seen as providing unfair advantages to some employees. (p. 630)

Moreover, enticing high-potential employees to consider leadership positions in the public sector is difficult because in the private sector, major incentives exist, such as higher salaries, generous bonuses, and other perks that are not available for those working within the public sector.

Civil Service Merit Systems: Time for a Paradigm Shift?

Kuhn (1996) discussed paradigm shifts, which he called normal science. A paradigm is a shift in theory because of another paradigm that seems to be better. According to Kuhn, “These transformations of the paradigms of physical optics are scientific revolutions, and the successive transition from one paradigm to another via a revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science” (p. 12). Furthermore, Kuhn claimed that when decisions are made, it carries an assumption that only certain sorts of circumstances will arise. He argued that it is “only when an experiment and tentative theory are together articulated to a match does the discovery emerge and the theory becomes a paradigm” (Kuhn, 1996, p. 62). Based on this, NPM, and consequently EAW, can be seen as a paradigm shift or scientific revolution as experiments and theory

matched and shifted the paradigm. Normal science strives to bring theory and fact closer to an agreement.

Moreover, Kuhn (1996) acknowledged that it is often during a crisis that a new paradigm emerges before the crisis has developed too far. When there is a paradigm shift, such as with EAW personnel systems, the resulting transition to a new paradigm is a scientific revolution. Political revolutions parallel scientific revolutions and occur when “government agencies fail to meet the problems posed. Political revolutions aim to change the political intuitions in ways that those institutions themselves prohibit” (Kuhn, 1996, p. 93).

Osborne and Plastrik (1994) gave Kuhn (1996) credence by stating the following:

To change a culture, you have to change people’s paradigms. You will need to change most of the assumptions we described, that rank rules, that risk is to be avoided at all costs, that every mistake will be punished, and that decisions must be kicked upstairs. This is extremely difficult because people cling ferociously to their paradigms. (Osborne & Plastrik, 1994, p. 265)

Kobrak (1993) stated that the time is right for action: “Interest is growing in decentralization and the use of market and quasi-market forces to stimulate the productive use of resources” (p. 357).

Because several states and local governments use an EAW personnel system, these states had a political revolution. Why are states that use civil service merit systems not experiencing the same political revolution? Part of the answer boils down to performance and democratic accountability. Despite scholars calling the attention to

NPM, HRM reform, and the need for a paradigm shift in the public sector, Mills (2010) stated,

Even in the best of times, civil service and management reform rank low on the priority list of issues facing our government; chronic, third tiered problems that are easy to pontificate about, but only occasionally deemed worthy of serious interest or sustained attention. And in the times such as we face now—with a vast array of huge challenges, in virtually every arena—the odds of anything truly significant or substantive happening in this back water domain are slim to none. (p. 228)

Performance and Democratic Accountability

Performance and democratic accountability are at the core of both public administration and political science because, inherently, democratic government is accountable government. Behn (2001) defined the NPM as “the entire collection of tactics and strategies that seek to enhance the performance of the public sector” (p. 26). Kobrak (1993) argued that state bureaucracies have become more accountable for their actions: “In a sense, this is both understandable and desirable. Even state bureaucrats concede the virtues of accountability, at least in theory. Yet accountability is a multidimensional concept” (p. 398).

To hold government’s administrative agents, both public and private, democratically accountable and responsive is a monumental task that has been given much attention and emphasis since the 1960s. Kaufman (1967) pioneered this movement, along with others, and argued that unique among large decentralized organizations, the Forest Service had been able to maintain its focus and discipline because the people

within it were all very similar; they all went to forestry school and were all foresters. The high esteem in which the Forest Service was held was not limited to the public; it was carried over to Congress, which gave the agency large budgets and autonomy to allow the Forest Service to do its job. Although the Forest Service had a rigid, almost military hierarchy, it has been an unusually successful organization for much of its history.

Behn (2001) took an in-depth look at the issue of democratic accountability and stated that an individual is either a “holder of accountability or accountability holdee. It’s great to be an accountability holder. It’s not so much fun to be an accountability holdee” (p. 2). These two concepts are incorporated into Behn’s definition of democratic accountability, which includes finances, fairness, and performance. In Behn’s view, Americans’ emphasis on finances and fairness causes poor administrative performance, potentially threatening governmental legitimacy.

Sherk (2021) stated, “Democracy operates on the principle of government by the consent of the governed. When career employees attempt to prevent elected officials from implementing their agenda, they undermine American democracy” (p. 27). Furthermore, Sherk stated that protections shield career bureaucrats from democratic accountability for how they exercise power. Sherk (2022) also noted that removal restrictions can undermine the government’s democratic accountability: “Democratic accountability exists only if career staff are meaningfully accountable, and in practice, removal restrictions significantly weaken this accountability” (p. 4).

Summary

The researcher’s synthesis matrix can be found in Appendix A. The synthesis matrix illustrates the researcher’s literature review used within this study and the

respective authors' area of expertise. This synthesis matrix compares literature focusing on proponents and opponents to NPM, HRM reform, civil service merit and EAW personnel systems and their positive and negative aspects, transformational change leadership, and transformational change.

This literature review examined the existing literature on transformational change leadership and transformational change and their impact on employee recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention in state and local government civil service merit systems that require competitive examinations for advancement. Weber's (1946) theory on public sector bureaucracies and Burns's (1978) addition and use of the four I's when defining transformational change leadership have been widely cited by scholars and continue to find applicability to these theories.

The literature on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's (1964) two-factor motivation hygiene theory is integral to understanding transformational change leadership and a person's motivation. These two theories dovetail Mitchell et al.'s (2001) job embeddedness theory, which explains why people stay in their jobs, but focus differently on employee retention. Further, barriers that affect retention were discussed, including but not limited to lack of empowerment and the importance of exit and voice.

The NPM and how and why it was developed for the public sector was discussed. Civil service merit systems and competitive examinations were examined to illustrate the interconnection between employee retention. Scholarly literature was synthesized to demonstrate both sides of the argument about why NPM and HRM reform is needed and why it is not. Whether or not scholars agree with NPM and HRM reform, the research gap is clear: not enough research has been done to statistically analyze the differences

between public civil service sector merit and EAW personnel systems, which is an extension of NPM.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The new public management (NPM) is the modern-day “framework or paradigm through which governments at all levels are modernized and re-engineered to strengthen the relationship between government and society” (Fakhrul, 2015, p. 142). The NPM movement is a bundle of techniques of private sector practices that “promises a leaner and better government, decentralization, empowerment, customer satisfaction, and better mechanisms of public accountability” (Fakhrul, 2015, p. 142). Furthermore, Fakhrul (2015) stated that the traditional civil service merit system has been replaced in many countries by the advancement of NPM and HRM reform processes since the late 1980s. Therefore, the NPM and HRM reform represents a transformational change in the public sector to cultivate and enhance the relationship between government and society.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this nonexperimental, descriptive, and comparative research aimed to compare state and local government professionals who are members of the Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) who work within a state or local government civil service merit system or within a state or local government EAW system. Furthermore, this study examined the extent to which each personnel employment system allowed state and local government PSHRA professionals recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff; how their respective personnel system impacted succession planning; and the need for transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study include the following:

1. To what extent do PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government personnel system is effective with recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of state and local government employees?
2. To what extent do state and local government PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government's personnel system is helpful with effective succession planning when hiring new talent?
3. To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change leadership is necessary regarding their personnel system's recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?
4. To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change is occurring within their personnel system regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?
5. To what degree are there differences between PSHRA state and local government professionals regarding their personnel system related to recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning?

Research Design

The methodology for this study used a nonexperimental design. Specifically, descriptive and comparative approaches were used. Quantitative research measures and explains phenomena through numbers, statistics, structure, control, and two essential

subclassifications: experimental and nonexperimental (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

In an experimental design, the researcher can intervene with procedures that determine what the subjects will experience. On the other hand, a nonexperimental design describes and explains relationships between different phenomena without manipulating the conditions encountered (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 23).

Appropriate use of a quantitative design occurs when a researcher wants to control what will happen to subjects by an experimental design. This approach can also investigate cause-and-effect relationships between interventions and measured outcomes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In addition, Creswell (2014) explained that a quantitative design is only appropriate for a study that will generalize from a sample to a population.

Population

Population in research terms is defined as a “group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the research results” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). The population for this study were state and local government Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) professionals. PSHRA changed their name from the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) in January 2023.

Target Population

A target population is the entire set of individuals chosen from the overall population used to make predictions to the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The target population meets all the criteria of the larger population for which the findings are generalized. Target populations are identified for research because it is typically not

feasible to study large groups; therefore, researchers choose samples from within a larger group (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The target population for this study was state and local government PSHRA professionals. Each state and local government PSHRA survey respondent must have had a minimum of 2 years of full-time HR experience in one or more of the following practice areas: recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, benefits administration, labor management, classification and compensation, testing, and/or retaining of public sector staff, who were either competitive or noncompetitive and knew how their respective personnel system impacts succession planning and transformational change leadership. PSHRA is the only national HR association with a dedicated focus on the public sector with members from federal, state, and local governments. The target population was spread among 38 states with 8,000 state and local government PSHRA members.

Each PSHRA state and local member survey respondent was a state and/or local chapter member in good standing and worked within the continental United States. The following lists the PSHRA membership from 38 states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Washington DC, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and West Virginia.

Sample

Researchers generalize findings based on a sample, which is a group of participants selected from the population. Sampling is selecting a “group of individuals

from whom data are collected” (Millan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). This study focused on purposeful sampling because the researcher did not know who the 214 PSHRA state or local government respondents would be. The purposeful sample included 122 state and local government PSHRA professionals who worked within a civil service merit system and 92 state and local government PSHRA professionals who worked within an EAW system. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) acknowledged that random sampling always has some error.

Further, this study used a stratified sampling approach. There were two groups: state and local government PSHRA professionals who worked within a civil service merit system and state and local government PSHRA professionals who worked within an EAW system. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “In nonproportional (or disproportionate sampling), the research selects the same number of subjects to be in each stratum of the sample” (p. 134).

Instrumentation

PSHRA’s CEO permitted the researcher to survey the 8,000 state and local government PSHRA membership on December 18, 2023 (see Appendix B). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that structured surveys use a set of questions prepared and presented to each candidate identically while employing a strict, predetermined order. This study used a structured survey that did not allow for variation in the question order or follow up based on responses. The survey was developed based on PSHRA state and local government professionals’ experience working either within a civil service merit or an EAW personnel system.

The theoretical framework of the survey was guided by NPM principles. State and local government PSHRA survey respondents were asked about their knowledge, skills, experience, and unbiased attitudes concerning their personnel system. More specifically, the survey questions captured the effectiveness of state and local governments PSHRA professionals working within a civil service merit or EAW personnel system concerning recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retaining of public sector staff and how these core elements dovetail into succession planning. In addition, PSHRA survey respondents were asked about their need for transformational change leadership and whether transformational change is currently happening within their respective personnel system.

Protecting human participants was essential for practical and ethical reasons. The researcher submitted an application to the UMass Global University Institutional Review Board for review and approval before data collection. The application addressed privacy, the UMass Global Bill of Rights (Appendix C), confidentiality of information and data, the UMass Global Informed Consent process (Appendix D), and the researcher's CITI completion certification (Appendix E). The data collection phase of this study did not begin until the UMass Global Institutional Review Board's approval was received by the researcher on January 8, 2024 (see Appendix F).

Validity

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that "validity is the truthfulness of findings and conclusions" (p. 104). The data gathered from the surveys measured the way state and local government PSHRA professionals viewed their personnel system and their ability to be transformational change leaders. According to McMillan and Schumacher, "Statistical conclusion validity will help determine if claimed relationships reflect actual

relationships” (p. 105). The survey was truthful because it helped capture how state and local government PSHRA professionals view their workforce and their ability to retain transformational leaders.

An expert panel established validity of the survey’s authenticity for this study. The survey was reviewed by PSHRA’s CEO Cara Woodson Welch, Esq.; Dr. J. Kevin Corder, an accomplished professor of political science at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan; and Bob Lavigna, an award-winning, public sector leader and innovator with more than 30 years of experience leading government organizations and programs, including PSHRA. The survey reviewers examined questions during the pilot phase to assess content validity. Feedback from the reviewers was incorporated into the survey, and the survey was finalized. During the review process, the types of questions per personnel system, the possible asymmetry, types of variables, and survey length were reviewed as well as the value of this study to both academic scholars and practitioners alike. Appendix G includes the researcher’s alignment table corresponding to the five overarching research questions for this study and where the questions were found within the survey. Finally, the survey reviewers were informed that the survey respondents would be asked whether they would like to be issued a \$5 e-gift card or donate their \$5 e-gift to a charity as a thank you for participating. The survey respondent could also decline both options.

The survey was posted on PSHRA’s online community forum on January 23, 2024, to which only members have access. In addition, PSHRA sent a blast email to their state and local government membership, and the researcher emailed nearly all PSHRA local chapters in February 2024. The deadline for the survey was February 16, 2024. In

addition to the minimum qualifications, each survey had instructions and a form for survey participants to read. Personal information, such as name, email, and phone number, were optional. The respondent's email was required if requesting or donating their \$5 e-gift card. In addition to the minimum qualifications, the survey had the UMass Global Bill of Rights, which survey respondents had to agree with by checking a box and needed to give UMass Global Informed Consent by checking another box. If either of these were denied, the respondent was disqualified from the survey as required by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. Survey participants who completed the survey were offered a \$5 e-gift card that they could either redeem from various stores and restaurants, donate their \$5 e-gift to a selected charity, or they could decline both options.

Reliability

Patten (2017) described that validity is the capacity of a tool to measure what it purports to measure, and reliability is the consistency with which an instrument yields results. For this study, the survey results could be reproduced if the participants are given the survey again by a different researcher or in different environments. However, if the survey is given again a few years later, the results may differ because conditions and the political climate change. In addition, the test results could be reproduced under the same conditions with different observers. Still, consistency may not remain if participants are given the assessment a few years later.

The researcher established reliability with three state HR experts. The researcher analyzed the themes and the consistency of the answers with three HR experts. After extensive analysis, the survey instrument was deemed reliable because the same concept produced consistent results among the three experts. After this exercise, a clear

connection was apparent between the raw data and the resulting quantitative themes from the survey.

Data Collection

The CEO of PSHRA, Cara Woodson Welsh, Esq., granted the researcher permission to conduct the study in December 2023. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “A researcher must provide retrospective accounts of how data will be synthesized and identify the final analytic strategies used” (p. 337).

A survey, which included the UMass Global Bill of Rights and the UMass Global Informed Consent process, was used to consider the degree to which state and local government PSHRA professionals throughout the nation viewed their respective personnel systems. In addition, the survey also served the purpose of identifying the extent to which PSHRA state and local government professionals could effectively recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff while focusing on effective succession planning. The survey was posted on PSHRA’s online community forum on January 23, 2024, to which only members have access. In addition, PSHRA sent a blast email to their state and local government membership, and the researcher emailed nearly all PSHRA local chapters in February 2024. The deadline for the survey was February 16, 2024.

The 214 surveys were divided into 122 state and local government PSHRA professionals working with a civil service merit system and 92 state and local government PSHRA professionals working within an EAW system. The survey collected quantifiable information from state and local government PSHRA professionals nationwide. The data were obtained in a structured manner. Structured quantitative questions were used to simplify the analysis process. Structured questions forced

respondents to select the degree to which they perceived the strengths and weaknesses of their respective state personnel system. The responses of state and local government PSHRA professionals obtained this way were quantified, making statistical analysis possible. Structured surveys also provided a simple format for respondents to complete.

The survey explored new elements of new public management (NPM) by addressing five specific NPM components (see Appendix I). Questions were on a 6-point scale, and respondents were able to add optional comments to their ratings. The first portion of the survey asked about their perceptions of PSHRA professionals working in a state and local government and their respective personnel systems' impact on the recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of public sector employees. The second section of the questionnaire offered questions about the perceptions of state and local government PSHRA professionals' ability to effectively engage in succession planning based on their respective personnel systems. The third section of the survey assessed the degree to which state and local governments view the need for transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector and whether transformational change is currently occurring. The last section uses *z* scores to analyze and compare state and local government PSHRA professionals' survey responses regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning to determine any statistically significant differences between the two public sector personnel systems.

Data Analysis

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), "A researcher must provide retrospective accounts of how data will be synthesized and identify the final analytic strategies used" (p. 337). The quantitative survey data were downloaded from

SurveyMonkey upon completion of the data collection. Descriptive statistics were then calculated to answer each question. The measure of central tendency yields information about the center, or middle part, of a group of numbers. The mode is the most frequently occurring value in a data set, and the median is the central value in an ordered array of numbers. Finally, the arithmetic mean is synonymous with the average of a group of numbers and is computed by summing all numbers and dividing by the total number of surveys (n).

The researcher conducted z tests to analyze the differences in data between the two public sector personnel systems. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a z test is an inferential statistical procedure that determines the probability levels of rejecting the null hypothesis that the two means are the same. A z test helped the researcher compare the means of both groups concerning how each personnel system allows state and local government PSHRA professionals to properly recruit, hire, promote, retain, and focus on effective succession planning.

Delimitations

Delimitations that limited the scope of this study included only state and local government PSHRA members. PSHRA is the leading dedicated public sector national association for HR professionals practicing at all three levels of government. Membership requires a paid membership, so not all state and local government HR professionals are members, and not all states have members. Moreover, delimitations included a small sample size and did not include interviews.

Summary

While using the NPM theoretical framework, the researcher performed a quantitative methods study by comparing PSHRA state and local government professionals that use a traditional civil service merit system versus states and local governments that use an EAW personnel system. The researcher analyzed each personnel systems' ability to effectively recruit, hire, promote and retain the best candidates and the subsequent effects on succession planning. The significance of this study is that it will contribute considerably to scholarly literature and fill a pressing research gap on the NPM theoretical framework and public sector HRM reform.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

This chapter describes the statistical analyses conducted to test the study's research questions. The chapter begins by reiterating the purpose statement and research questions, followed by a summary of the study methodology. Next, descriptive statistics and *z* test scores that were conducted by personnel system regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning are discussed. Furthermore, data on the need for transformational change leadership were analyzed as well as whether transformational change is occurring within each variable. Subsequently, the data and findings are reported by the research question. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this nonexperimental, descriptive, and comparative research aimed to compare state and local government professionals who are members of the Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) who work within a state or local government civil service merit system or within a state or local government EAW system. Furthermore, this study examined the extent to which each personnel employment system allowed state and local government PSHRA professionals recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff; how their respective personnel system impacted succession planning; and the need for transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study include the following:

1. To what extent do PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government personnel system is effective with recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of state and local government employees?
2. To what extent do state and local government PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government's personnel system is helpful with effective succession planning when hiring new talent?
3. To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change leadership is necessary regarding their personnel system's recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?
4. To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change is occurring within their personnel system regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?
5. To what degree are there differences between PSHRA state and local government professionals regarding their personnel system related to recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

A survey was administered to capture state and local government PSHRA professionals' responses while focusing on five variables: recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning while assessing the need for transformational change

leadership and whether it is occurring. A quantitative methodology examined both civil service merit and EAW personnel systems. Using quantitative methods allowed the researcher to more accurately assess the impact of each public sector personnel system on the five core variables, including questions regarding transformational change leadership and its importance on the five variables and keeping up with the private sector. In this quantitative study, state and local government PSHRA professionals' responses were examined and compared between civil service merit and EAW personnel systems. The survey was posted on PSHRA's online community forum on January 23, 2024, to which only members have access. In addition, PSHRA sent a blast email to all state and local governments members and the researcher sent an email to nearly all PSHRA local chapters. The deadline for the survey was February 16, 2024. Personal information, such as name, email, and phone number, were optional. The respondent's email was required if requesting or donating their \$5 e-gift card. In addition to the minimum qualifications, the survey included the UMass Global Bill of Rights, which survey respondents had to agree with by checking a box and needed to agree with the UMass Global Informed Consent process by checking another box. If either of these were denied, the survey respondent was disqualified from the survey as required by the UMass Global University Institutional Review Board. Survey participants who completed the survey were offered a \$5 e-gift card that they could either redeem from various stores and restaurants, donate their \$5 e-gift to a selected charity, or they could decline both options.

Population

Approximately 8,000 state and local government PSHRA professionals throughout the United States qualified to be part of this research study. The population

was all current PSHRA state and local government professionals who were a state and/or local chapter member in good standing and who worked within the continental United States. In addition, each state and local government PSHRA survey respondent must have had a minimum of 2 years of full-time HR experience in one or more of the following practice areas: recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, benefits administration, labor management, classification and compensation, testing, and/or retaining of public sector staff, who were either competitive or noncompetitive and knew how their respective personnel system impacts succession planning and transformational change leadership.

Sample

The researcher generalized the findings based on a sample of participants selected from the population. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), sampling is selecting a “group of individuals from whom data are collected” (p. 129). The researcher focused on using purposeful, stratified sampling because the researcher did not know the 214 PSHRA state or local government professionals who completed the survey. The purposeful sample included 122 state and local government PSHRA professionals who worked within a civil service merit system and 92 state and local government PSHRA professionals who worked within an EAW system.

Demographic Data

A total of 214 PSHRA state and local government professionals throughout the United States completed the survey. Thirty-five of 38 states with PSHRA memberships were represented in this survey. A total of 122 (or 57%) of the respondents worked within a civil service merit system, and 92 (or 43%) worked within an EAW system. Table 1 shows that 48 state government and 74 local government PSHRA professionals worked

within a civil service merit system. In addition, 19 state government and 73 local government PSHRA EAW professionals completed the survey. The researcher received the greatest number of total PSHRA state and local government civil service merit and EAW system survey responses from California with 47 completed surveys, or 22% of the overall total, New York with 25 total completed surveys, or 11.7% of the overall total, and third place was a tie between Georgia and Missouri with 12 completed surveys each, or 5.6% each of the overall total.

Table 1*Total PSHRA State and Local Government HR Respondents by Personnel System*

State	Merit system			EAW system			State total	% of sample
	PSHRA state responses	PSHRA local government responses	Total responses	PSHRA state responses	PSHRA local government responses	Total responses		
Alabama	1		1				1	0.5
Alaska	1		1				1	0.5
Arizona		1	1		1	1	2	0.9
Arkansas				1		1	1	0.5
California	3	35	38	1	8	9	47	22.0
Colorado	1		1	1	5	6	7	3.3
Connecticut		1	1	1		1	2	0.9
Florida		1	1	3		3	4	1.9
Georgia		4	4	1	7	8	12	5.6
Hawaii		1	1				1	0.5
Idaho		1	1		3	3	4	1.9
Illinois					2	2	2	0.9
Kansas		1	1		8	8	9	4.2
Kentucky		1	1				1	0.5
Maryland	4	1	5				5	2.3
Michigan	1		1		1	1	2	0.9
Minnesota		2	2		2	2	4	1.9
Mississippi	1		1	2		2	3	1.4
Missouri		3	3		9	9	12	5.6
Nevada	1	1	2				2	0.9

Table 1 (*continued*)

State	Merit system			EAW system			State total	% of sample
	PSHRA state responses	PSHRA local government responses	Total responses	PSHRA state responses	PSHRA local government responses	Total responses		
New Jersey	7		7				7	3.3
New Mexico					1	1	1	0.5
New York	21	4	25				25	11.7
North Carolina	1	2	3		4	4	7	3.3
Ohio		2	2	1	2	3	5	2.3
Oklahoma		1	1				1	0.5
Oregon	1		1		3	3	4	1.9
Pennsylvania		1	1	1	1	2	3	1.4
Tennessee		2	2	1	2	3	5	2.3
Texas		1	1	2	6	8	9	4.2
Utah	1	3	4	1	2	3	7	3.3
Virginia		3	3	2	3	5	8	3.7
Washington	2	1	3	1	1	2	5	2.3
West Virginia	1		1				1	0.5
Wisconsin	1	1	2		2	2	4	1.9
Total	48	74	122	19	73	92	214	100.0

Note. PSHRA = Public Sector HR Association; EAW = employment at will.

Several survey questions were included to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample further. These included years of public sector HR experience, gender, and area(s) of HR expertise. Table 2 shows the number of years PSHRA respondents have worked in state and local government HR. Females accounted for 179 (or 83.6%) of the survey respondents, and males accounted for 34 (or 15.9%) of the total respondents. Table 3 shows how gender was broken down by personnel type.

Table 2

Years of Public Sector HR Expertise by Personnel System

Personnel system	2–5 years	6–10 years	11–15 years	16–20 years	21+ years	Total
Merit	26	34	10	24	28	122
EAW	15	22	18	10	27	92
Total	41	56	28	34	55	214

Note. EAW = employment at will.

Table 3

Gender by Personnel System

Personnel system	Female	Male	Prefer not to identify	Total
Merit	98	23	1	122
EAW	81	11		92
Total	179	34	1	214

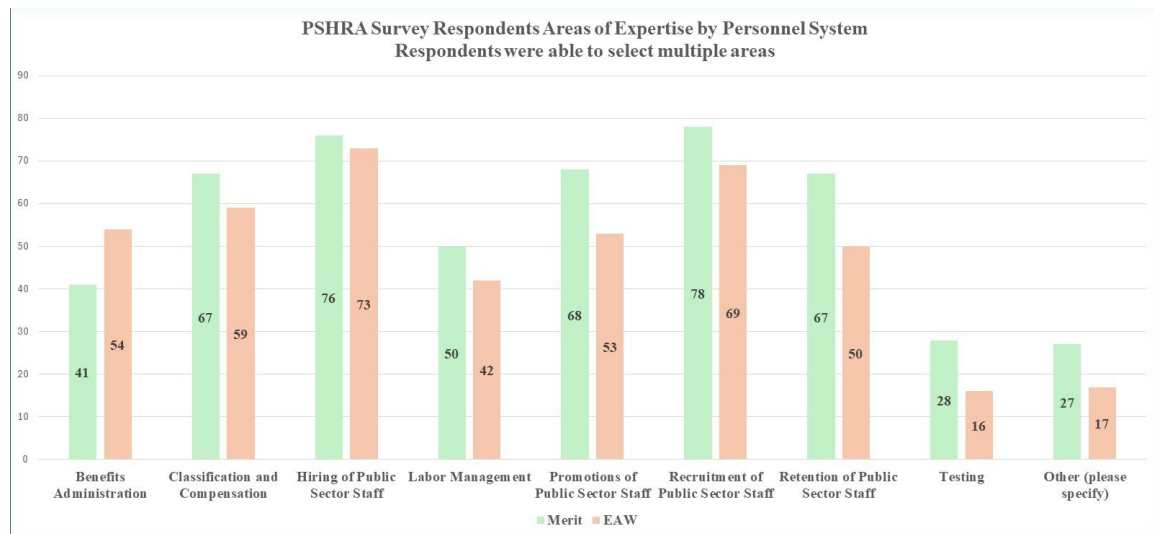
Note. EAW = employment at will.

Survey respondents could select as many areas of expertise as fit their HR position. Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of PSHRA state and local government respondents' public sector HR expertise by personnel type. The other areas of expertise indicated by survey respondents included payroll, employee relations, training and

development, data and finance, succession planning, strategic planning, worker's compensation, wellness, and general HR management.

Figure 1

PSHRA Survey Respondents' Areas of Expertise by Personnel System



Note. PSHRA = Public Sector HR Association; EAW = employment at will.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Through this study, the researcher sought a deeper understanding of the extent state and local government PSHRA professionals and their respective personnel system allowed them to recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff and how this dovetailed into effective succession planning. Respondents also shared about the need for transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector and whether any transformational change is occurring within the five variables. The target population was spread among 38 states with approximately 8,000 state and local government PSHRA professionals.

Findings for Research Questions

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, “To what extent do PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government personnel system is effective with recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of state and local government employees?” A 6-point Likert scale was used to determine how each personnel system can effectively recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff. The following values were assigned to each question: 0 (*strongly disagree*), 1 (*disagree*), 2 (*somewhat disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). Table 4 reflects the results for each variable.

Table 4

Personnel System Effectiveness in Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Retention

Variable	Merit system			EAW system		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Recruitment	122	3.19	1.32	92	3.48	1.02
Hiring	122	3.18	1.23	92	3.58	1.02
Promotion	122	3.17	1.30	92	3.40	1.21
Retention	122	2.92	1.20	92	3.12	1.16

Note. EAW = employment at will.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, “To what extent do state and local government PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government’s personnel system is helpful with effective succession planning when hiring new talent?” A 6-point Likert scale was used to determine the extent to which each personnel system can effectively succession plan. The following are the values assigned to the succession planning

question: 0 (*strongly disagree*), 1 (*disagree*), 2 (*somewhat disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). Table 5 reflects the descriptive statistics regarding succession planning by personnel system.

Table 5

Personnel System Effectiveness in Succession Planning

System	Merit system			EAW		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Succession planning	122	2.48	1.37	92	2.82	1.22

Note. EAW = employment at will.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, “To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change leadership is necessary regarding their personnel system’s recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?” A 6-point Likert scale was used to determine what degree each personnel system values transformational change leadership as important regarding to keep up with the private sector and its hiring practices. The following values were assigned to each question: 0 (*strongly disagree*), 1 (*disagree*), 2 (*somewhat disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). Table 6 shows PSHRA state and local government professionals’ responses regarding the importance and need for transformational change leadership and transformational change in their personnel system’s recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector. Based on

the findings of this study, the need for transformational change leadership is undoubtedly the key to improving upon all the analyzed variables.

Table 6

Importance of Transformational Change Leadership to Keep Up With the Private Sector

Personnel system	Merit system			EAW system		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Importance of transformational change leadership	120	4.29	0.83	89	4.40	0.75

Note. EAW = employment at will.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, “To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change is occurring within their personnel system regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?” A 4-point Likert scale was used to understand the degree to which transformational change occurs within recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning. The following values were assigned to each question: 0 (*no transformational change is occurring*), 1 (*some transformational change is occurring*), 2 (*transformational change is occurring but is slow and not a priority*), and 3 (*transformational change is happening and is a priority*). Table 7 shows the priority of transformational change by personnel system.

Table 7*Priority of Transformational Change by Personnel System*

Variable	Merit system			EAW system		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Recruitment	118	1.65	0.94	86	1.53	1.09
Hiring	117	1.62	0.97	86	1.49	1.06
Promotion	116	1.38	1.00	86	1.30	0.93
Retention	116	1.29	0.98	86	1.45	0.93
Succession planning	116	1.03	1.05	86	1.07	0.90

Note. EAW = employment at will.

Research Question 5

Research Question 5 asked, “To what degree are there differences between PSHRA state and local government professionals regarding their personnel system related to recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning?” The following values were assigned to each question: 0 (*strongly disagree*), 1 (*disagree*), 2 (*somewhat disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). Table 8 shows PSHRA state and local government professionals’ survey results of civil service merit and EAW systems comparison data. No statistically significant difference ($z = -1.81, p > .05$) existed between personnel systems regarding effective PSHRA state and local government staff recruitment. A statistically significant difference ($z = -2.57, p < .05$) was found between personnel systems in hiring. Furthermore, there were no statistically significant difference ($z = -1.33, p > .05$) between personnel systems regarding effective PSHRA state and local government staff promotion. Moreover, no statistically significant differences ($z = -1.24, p > .05$) existed between personnel systems

regarding effective PSHRA state and local government staff retention or ($z = -1.87$, $p < .05$) with effective succession planning.

Table 8

PSHRA Survey Results of Merit and EAW Comparison Data Analysis

Item	Statement	Merit ^a <i>M</i>	EAW ^b <i>M</i>	<i>z</i> score
1	Recruits the most qualified candidates for job openings	3.19	3.48	-1.81
2	Hires the most qualified candidates	3.18	3.58	-2.57*
3	Promotes qualified candidates	3.17	3.40	-1.33
4	Retains the most qualified candidates	2.92	3.12	-1.24
5	Is helpful with effective succession planning	2.48	2.82	-1.87

Note. PSHRA = Public Sector HR Association; EAW = employment at will.

^a $n = 122$. ^b $n = 92$.

* $p < .05$.

Summary

A survey was administered to capture state and local government PSHRA professionals' responses focusing on five variables: recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning within their respective personnel system. A quantitative methodology examined PSHRA state and local government civil service merit and EAW personnel systems, with focus on five variables: their ability to recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff and how these variables dovetail into effective succession planning. Moreover, the researcher assessed the need of PSHRA state and local government professionals on how important transformational change leadership is to keep up with the private sector and whether transformational change is occurring within the five variables.

Thirty-five of 38 states with PSHRA memberships were represented in this survey. A total of 122 (or 57%) of the respondents worked within a civil service merit system, and 92 (or 43%) worked within an EAW system. Further breakdown of the survey showed that 48 state government and 74 local government PSHRA professionals worked within a civil service merit system and 19 state government and 73 local government PSHRA professionals worked within an EAW system.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and z scores for the five research questions presented in nonexperimental, descriptive, and comparative research. Furthermore, the importance of transformational change leadership and whether transformational change was occurring within respondents' personnel systems were analyzed. Based on the findings of this study, the need for transformational change leadership is undoubtedly the key to improving upon all the analyzed variables.

The average scores for personnel system effectiveness in recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention showed that PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system trailed behind those working in an EAW system. Personnel system effectiveness in succession planning showed that those working within an EAW had a slightly higher mean score than PSHRA professionals working within a civil service merit system. Transformational change leadership had high average scores and was very important to PSHRA state and local government professionals regarding their recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector, with EAW having a slightly higher average. The priority of transformational change leadership by personnel system showed that those working within a civil service merit system have higher recruitment,

hiring, and promotion averages. Despite the high averages for both personnel systems on the importance of transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector, both personnel systems are slow in implementing transformational change. Finally, z score statistical analyses on recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning showed that the only statistically significant difference between personnel systems was in hiring.

Chapter IV presented the results of the data analysis for the five research questions. Chapter V presents the significant findings, conclusions, implications for actions, and recommendations for further research and concludes with reflections from the researcher.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings; conclusions and implications for action based on the data analyzed in Chapter IV are then presented. Recommendations for further research and limitations are discussed. The chapter concludes with reflections from the researcher.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this nonexperimental, descriptive, and comparative research aimed to compare state and local government professionals who are members of the Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) who work within a state or local government civil service merit system or within a state or local government EAW system. Furthermore, this study examined the extent to which each personnel employment system allowed state and local government PSHRA professionals recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff; how their respective personnel system impacted succession planning; and the need for transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study include the following:

1. To what extent do PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government personnel system is effective with recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of state and local government employees?
2. To what extent do state and local government PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government's personnel system is helpful with effective succession planning when hiring new talent?

3. To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change leadership is necessary regarding their personnel system's recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?
4. To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change is occurring within their personnel system regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?
5. To what degree are there differences between PSHRA state and local government professionals regarding their personnel system related to recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning?

Major Findings

Major Finding 1

An EAW system is slightly more effective than a civil service merit system regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention.

Using a 6-point Likert scale, PSHRA state and local government professionals who work within an EAW personnel system ($n = 92$) have higher averages to recruit ($M = 3.48$), hire ($M = 3.58$), promote ($M = 3.40$), and retain ($M = 3.12$) public sector staff than PSHRA state and local government professionals who work within a civil service merit system. This finding is on par with NPM scholarly literature that suggested that human resource management (HRM) reform enables HR professionals within an EAW system to operate more efficiently and effectively. The findings of these four variables are not surprising and support proponents of NPM and HRM reform. However, when

using z scores, the only statistically significant difference among these variables was in hiring. Therefore, civil service merit system examinations mediate the ability of PSHRA state and local government professionals to hire the most qualified candidate for job openings.

Survey Respondents' Comments on Recruitment

Although respondents' comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals who worked within a civil service merit system stated the following regarding recruiting the most qualified candidate:

- “Recruitment is difficult due to the lack of entry to the public, and as a result, HR professionals are constantly recycling the same candidate pool.”
- “The testing process is too long and complicated for many highly qualified candidates, so it is nearly impossible to recruit the best.”
- “We [HR professionals] must bring state government practices into this century and rarely test candidates on the job we want to fill. Examinations are based on reading comprehension, math, and various other basics, which do not provide a clear indicator of the knowledge a candidate has for specific positions we want to be filled.”
- “We [HR professionals] have found that most of the time, the candidates who score highest are not fit for the job, while those who score lowest are.”
- “The laws of their merit system are too old and do not test for the duties of the actual job.”
- “The merit system screens for selections but is not a vehicle for recruitment.”

- “Job classifications are not up to date; relying on a merit system alone is not adequate to attract top talent.”
- “The effectiveness of recruiting depends on how consistent, active, and targeted the recruiting efforts are; within this, the benefits of the merit system need to be highlighted. Relying on the merit system alone is not practical in attracting top talent; however, it works for those who are already in the system, i.e., those working at the federal, state, or local level.”
- “Incumbents may not test well.”

Although respondents’ comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals who worked within an EAW system stated the following regarding recruiting the most qualified candidate:

- “We [HR professionals] are not entirely sure that our postings are reaching the desired audience.”
- “Hiring the most qualified person is not always the goal, as their locality cannot afford the desired person.”
- “Recruitment is becoming more and more complex.”
- “We [HR professionals] are not certain EAW impacts that, but it certainly does not help.”
- “EAW does not affect recruiting.”

Survey Respondents’ Comments on Hiring

Although respondents’ comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals who worked within a civil service merit

system stated the following regarding hiring the most qualified candidate for job openings:

- “The exams conducted for these promotional opportunities to advance one’s career have been proven not to be reliable, and studies have shown that inaccuracies don’t automatically translate to successfully filling a role.”
- “It is a system that produces only good test takers, not those who are genuinely qualified to do the job.”
- “The hiring effectiveness depends on how/what/when the testing instruments will take place (and what they yield), assuming the application screening is done in a timely manner.”
- “It is unknown if some candidates had a lousy day testing and could otherwise have been a candidate for the position.”
- “Sometimes, seniority credits score higher even though they are not the best candidates.”
- “The intention is for exam plans to be structured so that candidates that most fit the requirements and responsibilities of the position will score higher.”
- “More skill-based tests should be utilized for positions.”
- “Competitive examinations are created for senior staff so that they will score higher.”
- “There are sometimes no applicants due to the cumbersome process.”
- “We [HR professionals] cannot always compete with other agencies or private companies for the most qualified candidates.”

- “We [HR professionals] are limited on incentives and salary ranges we can offer to close the deal with candidates once they have gone through the interviewing process.”
- “The merit system is merely a structure for designing the hiring process and avoids nepotism.”
- “There are limitations due to fixed salary ranges, which results in the best qualified candidate turning down the offer of employment.”
- “Hiring departments do not understand the merit system and do not want to hire from eligible lists.”
- “Competitive exams don’t truly measure a person’s ability to perform.”
- “Sometimes, the top scorers are excellent test takers and may not necessarily be the best.”
- “In general, it seems to work, but maybe not ideally.”
- “The pay associated with state jobs is usually lower than private-sector jobs, and lower pay does not always attract high-quality employees.”

Although respondents’ comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals who worked within an EAW system stated the following regarding hiring the most qualified candidate for job openings:

- “It is challenging to get employees since the pay is low, and there is no system for promotion, nor are there career paths.”
- “Without formal and validated testing, they sometimes miss the mark on hiring the most qualified candidate.”

- “Some competencies cannot be measured in an interview alone; the real obstacle is the interview process to determine who is the best candidate accurately.”
- “We [HR professionals] feel that they get lucky if we end up with highly qualified candidates.”
- “We [HR professionals] are very particular about who is hired and ensure the new hire will be a good fit.”
- “While we use assessments to help with recruitment for some positions, our system would be more effective if assessments were used for the majority of hires.”
- “We [HR professionals] have a robust process in place, but it still does not screen out everyone.”
- “We [HR professionals] still have rankings but are not confined unless there are bargaining rights to a position.”
- “Hiring managers do not take time to establish qualifying criteria matching the position’s knowledge, skills, and experience.”

Survey Respondents’ Comments on Promotions

Although respondents’ comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals who worked within a civil service merit system stated the following regarding promoting the most qualified candidate:

- “The right staff, due to our civil service rules, sometimes those with seniority credits, score higher even though they are not the best candidates and are not competent to perform the job duties of a higher level, yet they score high and are appointed off the eligibility list.”

- “There are brilliant staff that aren’t good test takers.”
- “The system is very useful when you have many candidates who minimally qualify, but the goal is to identify the most qualified.”
- “For internal candidates, experience is scrutinized more than outside candidates, and you don’t always get extra points for working for the agency already.”
- “Sometimes promotions are determined solely by tenure within the agency, disregarding other equal or more qualified staff members who could perform the job equally or even better.”
- “Employees respect the merit system process, and it is an excellent way to ensure fairness.”
- “That merit for promotion, when our testing system uses technical (rather than generic writing/reading) questions, does seem to bring qualified candidates to the forefront, although it does suffer slightly from similar issues of hiring in that testing can be exclusionary, it is less apparent with promotions in areas where people are assumed to at least be familiar with the process.”
- “In many cases, political appointees interfere with the merit process and engage in favoritism for higher levels of merit positions.”

Although respondents’ comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals who worked within an EAW system stated the following regarding promoting the most qualified candidate:

- “Sometimes, employees are promoted based on their years of service, not by the qualities required to be a good leader.”

- “Millennials and others who come to state government leave before 5 years once they realize that there is no career path and no annual increase ... only a happenstance promotion.”
- “With internal promotions, current staff do not always complete the application to include all positions they have held or include information on what they do in the job.”
- “If we [HR professionals] don’t interview and only rely on lists, even for internal individuals, it makes it difficult to set your standards and expectations for the new role.”
- “We [HR professionals] are governed by a collective bargaining agreement that limits promoting that without merit attached to promotions, HR professionals end up simply promoting average candidates and, therefore, have average supervisors.”
- “There aren’t many promotional opportunities, so it becomes competitive when employees apply for an internal job.”

Survey Respondents’ Comments on Employee Retention

Although respondents’ comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals who worked within a civil service merit system stated the following regarding retaining the most qualified candidates:

- “Once hired, staff in the civil service system tend to stay for pension reasons.”
- “Some employees are exempt from civil service, and it’s harder to retain them since they would have to start over from the bottom to enter the civil service

system probationary periods to the fullest extent to retain the most qualified individuals.”

- “We [HR professionals] typically are forced to hire candidates who are not our 1st or even 2nd choices to reach those we would like to hire and retain.”
- “The merit system list only assists in retaining those who can take an exam and score well, not necessarily qualified to do the job.”
- “There are so many other variables that have an impact on retention—the merit system has its time and place, but it does not have a reliable effect in retaining the most qualified people.”
- Top talent moves on when the ceiling of the merit system is reached.”
- “Other factors besides the merit system can help effectively retain the most qualified candidates, i.e., the daily nature of the job, overall workplace culture, and atmosphere.”
- “Restrictions for salary placement, or when it is too low, make the position less competitive.”
- “We [HR professionals] cannot compete with private companies in terms of salary, bonuses, incentives, et cetera.”
- “Some employees who make a great effort to improve their performance using additional training, et cetera, receive the same merit as employees who are doing the bare minimum each day and that when taking that into account, it’s not effective and some employees choose to leave.”
- “Retention is tied to money benefits and work perks, and that retention of existing employees is not as dependent on the merit system.”

Although respondents' comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals who worked within an EAW system stated the following regarding retaining the most qualified candidates:

- “State governments cannot compete with the salaries as pay isn’t always competitive with the private sector, even though it is good pay and benefits are excellent, retention is difficult if they don’t have leadership actively involved with the employees.”
- “It isn’t the EAW part that hurts retention. We are locally small, so minimum career growth and pay aren’t always competitive with the private sector, even though it is good pay, benefits are excellent.”
- “Retention is difficult if you don’t have leadership actively involved in the employees. This is outside of the recruitment process and is more of an operations lane.”
- “Their salary administration policy provides more restrictions than EAW.”
- “With the current bidding war for talent, it’s tough to retain anyone, no matter their skill set.”
- “EAW system does not affect retention.” (stated by several of the HR professionals)

Major Finding 2

The EAW system is somewhat more effective than a civil service merit system regarding succession planning.

Using a 6-point Likert scale, PSHRA state and local government professionals who work within an EAW personnel system have a greater ability to succession plan

($n = 92$, $M = 2.82$) than PSHRA professionals who work within a civil service merit system ($n = 122$, $M = 2.48$). This finding is also on par with scholarly NPM literature that suggested that HRM reform enables PSHRA state and local government professionals within an EAW system to more efficiently succession plan by cutting the red tape to ensure that the government continues to operate effectively. However, when using z scores, the difference between personnel systems regarding succession planning was not statistically significant.

Survey Respondents' Comments on Succession Planning

Although respondents' comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals who worked within a civil service merit system stated the following regarding succession planning:

- “Succession planning is a whole different animal and requires a separate system to be effective.”
- “There is not an active effort demonstrated or communicated across the state personnel system regarding succession planning.”
- “The system is outdated and does not give us real-time candidates when planning for the future. HR professionals need a system where they can have continuous examinations given or alternate ways to ensure qualified individuals are considered for positions.”
- “An obstacle is needing a slot for someone to fill.”
- “There is some dated information posted on the intranet, otherwise not visible.”
- “It is helpful if the merit system plans are clear, specific, are in alignment, and evaluate and reward those who meet and enhance succession further.”

- “We could do better.”
- “Many do not have a succession plan in place.”
- “The merit system does not facilitate succession planning.”
- “The merit system hinders succession planning because of the potential lack of mobility and list blockers.”

Although respondents’ comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals working within an EAW system commented on the following regarding effective succession planning:

- “It doesn't seem to make a difference if the supervisor isn't thinking about succession planning (most don't).”
- “If we aren't promoting the right people or can't hire enough bench depth for a department, that can significantly impact succession planning.”
- “Operations need to drive succession planning.”
- “We [HR professionals] are not sure there is any influence.”
- “We [HR professionals] are getting better as our leaders are slowly starting to retire or have a plan in place to retire.”
- “We [HR professionals] can do a better job at succession planning.”
- “It isn't EAW but the culture or tolerance for succession planning.”
- “EAW does not affect succession planning.”

Major Finding 3

Transformational change leadership is crucial.

Using a 6-point Likert scale, PSHRA state and local government professionals who work within an EAW ($n = 89$) and merit system ($n = 120$) find transformational

change leadership as highly necessary regarding their personnel system's recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector. EAW and civil service merit systems have very high means ($M = 4.40$ and $M = 4.29$, respectively) and show that PSHRA state and local government professionals in both personnel systems understand the importance of transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector.

According to Bass (1997), "Of the different leadership styles presented in the literature, transformational [change] leadership is characterized by envisioning, enabling, and empowering employees" (p. 21). Transformational change leadership focuses on building positive relationships between the leader and the subordinates. The relationship between the two is not forced such as under the command-and-control management model. Tupper and Ellis (2022) found that the command-and-control model contributes to the lack of trust, discourages workers from using their skills, and prevents workers from making autonomous decisions. Because the command-and-control model is archaic, transformational change leaders make it their mission to influence relationships positively, embrace emotional intelligence, allow for autonomy, and have face-to-face meetings (J. R. Thompson, 2021). Leaders who motivate employees through charisma and persuasion, characterized by transformational change leadership, positively affect productivity and well-being (Dughera, 2022; Tupper & Ellis, 2022).

Survey Respondents' Comments on the Importance of Transformational Change Leadership

Although respondents' comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit

system stated the following regarding the importance of transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector:

- “The government tends to stick to a bureaucratic hierarchy.”
- “Most, if not all, HR professionals in state government are pushing for constant and adaptive changes to attract and retain talent that the system itself should be transformational.”
- “While the private sector may have a different hiring process—expedient and more flexible—the private sector seems to overlook simple reform corrections and do so with knee-jerk, social media, trendy reactions. Transformational change leadership, in general, would benefit both state and private sector HR practices.”
- “The reason why HR professionals are so dysfunctional (at the state/local level) is that there are too many transactional HR leaders and not enough transformational HR leaders.”
- “Leadership at the most senior levels of the personnel system must be a champion of reform and consideration of efforts that result in becoming competitive in the overall employment marketplace.”
- “Viewing the organization as a living being rather than ‘how it has always been’ can help catch private sector trends and developments proactively rather than reactively. The public sector struggles with always being a step behind; keeping a thumb on the pulse of changes within the organization helps try to monitor best practices we are competing with.”
- “The system itself should be transformational.”

Although respondents' comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals working within an EAW system stated the following regarding the importance of transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector:

- “When it comes to transformational change leadership, government agencies are not designed to be transformational as they are transactional.”
- “Government entities are slower to react and have hoops to jump through that the private sector doesn’t.”
- “It is essential to implement best practices.”
- “The public sector isn’t known for being adaptive but reactive. Operating more as a business model would help them translate skills into the private sector. Volunteers in elected roles can’t do it, but stable administration trained in leadership.”
- “There is simply no question that public sector organizations must borrow a few pages from private sector best practices regarding transformational leadership.”

Major Finding 4

Transformational change is not a top priority

Although PSHRA state and local government professionals have high averages for both EAW ($n = 89$, $M = 4.40$) and civil service merit ($n = 120$, $M = 4.29$) regarding the importance of transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector, the averages for whether transformational change was occurring within the five variables are dismal for both public sector personnel systems. Transformational change was seemingly occurring within both personnel systems regarding recruitment, hiring,

promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector, but at bare minimum. PSHRA state and local government professionals who work within a civil service merit system had higher averages than EAW as to whether transformational change was occurring in recruitment ($n = 118$, $M = 1.65$), hiring ($n = 117$, $M = 1.62$), and promotion ($n = 116$, $M = 1.38$) out of a 4-point Likert scale.

EAW averages for whether transformational change was occurring are higher for retention ($n = 86$, $M = 1.45$) and succession planning ($M = 1.07$) on a 4-point Likert scale. All averages in the five variables were low, with succession planning being the weakest between EAW and civil service merit systems. According to Brown (2004), although the public sector has seen a significant HRM reform agenda for nearly 3 decades, replacing the Weberian, command-and-control, top-to-bottom practices with a performance-based culture, “there is little attention afforded to the specific field of HRM research and academic inquiry in relation to the public sector” (p. 304). Shim (2001) also argued that although there are many reasons why HRM reform is essential, one of the biggest is due to the number of public sector employees who will retire. As a result, government needs to be even more competitive with the private sector.

Survey Respondents’ Comments on the Priority of Transformational Change

Although respondents’ comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system commented on the following regarding prioritizing transformational change among all five variables:

- “Transformational change is only happening because there is a high vacancy rate and budget cuts.”

- “We [HR professionals] have been provided with minimal ability for transformational change.”
- “Leaders are doing what they can to be transformational, but on a statewide merit system level, nothing is happening.”
- “Change management and communication strategies for overcoming resistance and engaging stakeholders are essential.”
- “Building a culture of innovation and agility foster culture that values innovation and creativity, takes calculated risks, and learns from failures.”
- “Out-of-the-box thinking is slow on a statewide level and is prevented by some older, outdated ideologies.”
- “Changes to the workplace can be delayed or denied because the majority of our workforce belongs to bargaining units.”
- “We [HR professionals] are rolling out new programs to move our HR function towards a proactive and strategic service. These programs include workforce and succession planning, rewards, and recognition (employee-driven), redesigned employee performance management, and data analytics.”
- “Bargaining units have significant influence over changes to processes, especially involving hires/promotions/work conditions.”
- “The New York Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement Statewide (HELPS) program is being implemented by the New York State Governor’s Office (2023). The HELPS program will transform the recruitment and hiring process by allowing specific titles to be filled via a noncompetitive appointment, which means no examination is required.”

Although respondents' comments from the survey were optional for all questions, PSHRA state and local government professionals working within an EAW system commented on the following regarding prioritizing transformational change among all five variables:

- “Leaders are not provided with structured training to be leaders. There isn’t an incentive to return to learn to be a leader. Instead, applicants see the wage increase and feel they are qualified.”
- “Transparency in our public sector is lacking. If we could educate and expose the public to the work done, it would help get buy-in.”

Major Finding 5

Hiring is the only significant difference between EAW and civil service merit systems.

When it comes to the degree that there are differences between state PSHRA state and local government professionals who work within a civil service merit system and those who work within an EAW system, there was only one statistically significant difference between the two personnel systems as they relate to recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning. This one statistically significant difference was in hiring, as statistically analyzed with *z* scores. With a *z* score of -2.57, PSHRA state and local government professionals who work within an EAW system can more effectively hire public sector staff than PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system. Therefore, civil service merit system competitive examinations mediate the ability of PSHRA state and local government professionals to effectively hire the best candidate for the job. This is an

intriguing and puzzling result when comparing civil service merit and EAW personnel systems. According to Bowman and West (2007), the radical NPM movement, and consequently EAW, is seen as solving problems instead of creating them. This study does not entirely support this statement as only one of the five variables analyzed using *z* scores was statistically significant. This study supports the claims made by Brewer and Kellough (2016) that “researchers should continue to examine both the intended and unintended consequences of reforms and report on the broader implications of their findings” (p. 34). Similarly, Erdreich (1997) claimed that although the ultimate goal is a highly motivated public sector workforce, scholars and practitioners must work together to create that future with additional research.

Unexpected Findings

An unexpected finding was that despite the high averages of PSHRA state and local government professionals working within both EAW ($n = 89$, $M = 4.40$) and civil service merit systems ($n = 122$, $M = 4.29$) regarding the importance of transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector, the averages for whether transformational change is currently occurring with the five variables were dismal. Based on the findings, attention must be paid to the mismatch between the importance of transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector and why transformational change is rarely occurring within PSHRA state and local government professionals working within civil service merit and EAW systems.

An additional unexpected finding was that the only statistically significant difference between PSHRA professionals working within a civil service merit system and EAW system was in hiring. Therefore, civil service competitive examinations mediate

the ability of PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system to effectively hire the proper candidate for the job. The NPM theoretical framework touts that HRM reform has substantial differences, yet hiring was the only variable with a statistically significant difference among all five variables in this study. There were no statistically significant differences between civil service merit and EAW personnel systems regarding recruitment, promotion, retention, or succession planning.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1

The EAW system upheld the NPM framework with higher recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention averages.

PSHRA state and local government professionals working within an EAW system ($n = 92$) had higher averages in recruiting ($M = 3.48$), hiring ($M = 3.58$), promotion ($M = 3.40$), and retention ($M = 3.12$) than those working within a civil service merit system. These findings were unsurprising because they support the proponents' view of government and HRM reform. However, based on this study, the averages for EAW on a 6-point Likert scale were lower than expected.

Shi (2023) explained NPM as follows: "The productive experiences of contemporary economics and management ideas of the private sector are utilized as a reference for development, and therefore, they provide a suitable theoretical framework for the actualization of public sector management" (p. 1). With NPM emphasizing flexibility and weakening or eliminating traditional civil service protections, state and local governments working within an EAW system have an easier time recruiting, hiring,

promoting, and retaining public sector staff. However, despite EAW having higher averages for these variables, after running z scores, hiring was the only statistically significant difference. Therefore, civil service merit system competitive examinations do mediate PSHRA professionals' ability to hire the most qualified candidate.

Conclusion 2

EAW upheld the NPM framework with a higher average for succession planning.

PSHRA state and local government professionals working within an EAW system have a higher average for succession planning ($n = 92$, $M = 2.82$,) than those working within a civil service merit system ($n = 122$, $M = 2.48$). These findings were unsurprising because they support the proponents' view of government and HRM reform.

Consequently, the average was lower than expected for EAW on a 6-point Likert scale. However, after running z scores, there was no statistically significant difference between the two personnel systems regarding succession planning.

Wilkerson (2007) argued that public sector succession planning lags behind the private sector because of tenure, political leadership, personnel system rules, and lack of resources and focus. According to Marrelli (2022), "The Federal Merit System Principles and the Prohibited Personnel Practices established in Title 5 of the U.S. Code substantially limit flexibility in employee development and promotions, both key aspects of succession planning" (p. 630). The author argued that succession planning is challenging in the public sector due to this and uncertain budgets (Marrelli, 2022).

Shim (2001) argued that "little attention is afforded to the specific field of Human Resource Management (HRM) [reform] research and academic inquiry in relation to the public sector" (p. 304). Shim also argued that although there are many reasons why HRM

reform is essential, one of the biggest is because of the number of public sector employees who will retire. As a result, government needs to be even more competitive with the private sector.

Conclusion 3

Without transformational change leadership, PHSRA state and local government professionals working within civil service merit systems and EAW personnel systems will not keep up with the private sector.

Transformational change leadership was rated as highly important for PSHRA state and local government professionals working within EAW ($n = 89$, $M = 4.40$,) and civil service merit ($n = 120$, $M = 4.29$) systems when it comes to keeping up with the private sector. Transformational change leadership is vital in improving employees' openness to change. Sun (2021) stated that "the positive impacts of transformational leadership on individual, group, and organizational-level outcomes have been well documented, including higher subordinate job satisfaction, cooperation, organizational citizenship behaviors, commitment, performance information use, perceived work quality, and mission valence" (p. 554). With the high civil service merit and EAW system averages, PSHRA state and local government professionals understand the effects of transformational change leadership and its importance in keeping up with the private sector.

Conclusion 4

Although transformational change leadership is vital for PHSRA state and local government professionals, very little is occurring.

When comparing the importance of transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector and the actual use of transformational change within state and local governments, PSHRA state and local government professionals' averages regarding the use of such changes were dismal. This indicates a drastic mismatch between the importance of transformational change leadership and whether it is occurring within their respective personnel system. Bass (1990) argued that transactional leadership is a prescription for mediocrity. Similarly, Bass (1997) stated that "increasing transformational [change] leadership within the organization may help in recruitment" (p. 25). Although this study identified a gap between how transformational change leadership is crucial among PSHRA state and local government professionals, little transformational change is occurring within recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning. Bass (1990) stated, "Since we can identify and measure the factors associated with transformational [change] leadership, these factors should be incorporated into managerial assessment, selection, placement, and guidance programs—along with related assessments of relevant personal dimensions and individual differences" (p. 26). Bass noted,

Transformational [change] leadership needs to be fostered at all levels in the firm.

In order to succeed, the firm needs to have the flexibility to forecast and meet new demands and changes as they occur—and only transformational [change]

leadership can enable the firm to do so. (p. 31)

Conclusion 5

Hiring is the only statistically significant difference between civil service merit and EAW public sector personnel systems.

Although NPM, and therefore EAW, is touted as having significant differences compared to traditional civil service merit systems, after running z scores, the only statistically significant difference in this study was found in hiring. Therefore, civil service competitive examinations mediate the ability of PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system to effectively hire the best candidate for the job. There were no statistically significant differences between the two personnel systems regarding recruitment, promotion, retention, and succession planning. This conclusion yielded surprises in the data because it was unexpected that only hiring would be statistically significant.

According to Lapuente and Van de Walle (2020), “Despite an increase in empirical studies, we, however, still have limited understanding about its effects: has NPM increased, or decreased, the quality of the public services delivered?” (p. 462). Similarly, Alonso et al.’s (2015) claimed that attempts at assessing the effects of NPM have been hindered by a lack of comparable data. Further, the scarcity of measurements of the impacts of NPM is relatively ironic given that the usual justification of NPM by its more fervent proponents was precisely to improve measurement techniques to evaluate public sector performance better.

By running z scores, the researcher discerned that hiring was the only statistically significant difference between the two personnel systems. This was a surprising finding because NPM and, consequently EAW, are theoretically supposed to have more statistically significant differences compared to civil service merit systems with its traditional command-and-control bureaucratic government. Therefore, there were no

statistically significant differences between the two public sector personnel systems regarding recruitment, promotion, retention, and succession planning.

In response to scholars who argued that scholarly literature lacks comparable data regarding NPM and HRM reform, this study answers many questions in academic literature. Alonso et al. (2015) stated that a lack of comparable data has hindered attempts at assessing the effects of NPM and HRM reform. Alonso et al. further argued that the lack of measurements of NPM is ironic, given that the NPM proponents argue to improve the ability to measure public sector performance. In addition, the relationship between radical civil service reforms and their impacts on public sector personnel practices has not been precisely evaluated (Condrey & Battaglio, 2007). Therefore, according to many scholars, to better understand HRM reform, it is necessary to examine them from multiple perspectives (Condrey & Battaglio, 2007; Goodman & French, 2011). This research study accomplished these goals.

Implications for Action

Implication for Action 1

The NPM theoretical framework does not entirely correlate with EAW.

EAW has higher averages in recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning than civil service merit systems. However, after running *z* scores, hiring was the only statistically significant difference between the two systems. Therefore, civil service competitive examinations mediate the ability of PSHRA state and local government professionals to effectively hire the proper candidate for the job.

The NPM theoretical framework did not entirely hold with this study because more than hiring should be statistically significant between the two personnel systems.

Consequently, the momentum gained in the 1990s with the reinventing government movement has seemed to slow down, or parts, if not all, of the framework have been discarded due to the difficulty of implementing change in state and local government. As a result, state and local governments in both personnel systems must revisit the NPM theoretical framework and HRM reform. Was Weber (1946) right that a powerful bureaucracy is needed for effective government?

Although EAW averages in recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning were more significant than those within civil service merit systems, their averages were not staggeringly higher. Therefore, there is still room for improvement within EAW based on averages alone. What has happened to EAW to deviate so drastically from the NPM theoretical framework as found in this research study? Why was only hiring statistically significant? This study has unearthed significant findings for academic scholars and practitioners alike. There is more research needed to answer why hiring was the only statistically significant difference among the five variables.

Although PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system averaged lower than their counterparts in the five variables, their averages were close behind PSHRA state and local government professionals working within an EAW system. This could mean that PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system are stepping up their processes on the five variables, or EAW is not as flexible as scholarly literature has suggested, or perhaps, it could be a combination of both. Either way, PSHRA state and local government professionals in both personnel systems have areas for improvement in

recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning. This includes continued HR training, increasing focus groups, continuing to emphasize the importance within PSHRA national and local conferences, and qualitative and/or mixed methods studies to understand why the data from this study do not entirely support the NPM theoretical framework. This study has uncovered major deviations and questions regarding NPM and HRM reform.

Implication for Action 2

State and local government professionals working within civil service merit and EAW personnel systems need greater management latitude.

A consistent theme within both personnel systems is we have always done it this way thinking. The comments shared by PSHRA state and local government professionals revealed that regardless of their personnel system, this train of thought exists in both systems, which was not an expected result. PSHRA state and local government professionals in both personnel systems have a bureaucratic theme running within their personnel system, despite EAW having rid itself of bureaucratic undertones. A qualitative and/or mixed methods study is needed to determine why the data from this study do not entirely support the NPM theoretical framework or HRM reform.

Implication for Action 3

Although transformational leadership is essential to keep up with the private sector, HR professionals must integrate it, or the private sector will pull further ahead.

The data in this study showed that both PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit and EAW system rated transformational change leadership as essential to keep up with the private sector.

However, despite the dire need for this type of leadership, the averages among the five variables for prioritizing transformational change between both public sector personnel systems were dismal. The data showed the mismatch between how important transformational change leadership is versus whether transformational change is occurring. Both personnel systems are in critical need of improving upon the use of transformational change leadership and understanding its relationship to transformational change among the five variables within this study. State and local governments must continue to understand this gap and work to champion transformational change leadership by continued training, cutting red tape, and realizing that transformational change must occur to keep up with the private sector, and fully support its implementation. Otherwise, the gap between the public and private sectors will only increase.

Implication for Action 4

Succession planning is in dire need of attention.

Succession planning was the lowest average among PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit and EAW system. These drastically low averages and associated comments demonstrate how this imperative procedure desperately needs attention.

In April 2024, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics published its most recent data on the U.S. workforce, including public- and private-sector vacancies, hires, and separations. For February 2024 (preliminary data), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) reported 773,000 vacancies in state and local government but only 336,000 hires. In the federal government, there were 128,000 vacancies but only 44,000 hires. The

private sector had 7,855,000 vacancies and 5,438,000 hires. The ratio of 7.73:1.68 vacancies to hires in state and local government exceeds the ratio of 7.9:5.4 in the private sector. These numbers continue a long-term trend of a large gap between government vacancies and hires. These numbers strengthen the serious challenges government faces in hiring and retaining talent. In a LinkedIn post, Bob Lavigna (personal communication, October 9, 2024) stated the following:

How should government respond? Unfortunately, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. Some suggestions I often write and speak about:

- Brand and aggressively as opportunities to make a difference in the lives of the people government serves.
- Where it makes sense, eliminate arbitrary degree and experience requirements.
- Deliver a positive employment experience—the moments that matter for employees—to build engagement and create a great workplace to attract and retain talent.
- Collect and act on data to assess whether the organization is a great workplace. This includes conducting employee surveys to understand what employees feel good about and what needs to be improved.
- Use technology to generate critical workforce data, deliver customized experiences for individual employees, and improve operational efficiency.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) analyzed employment data and shared their projections through 2060. Toossi (2016) demonstrated how the share of 16- to 24-year-olds in the labor force is expected to decrease during 2015–2060. Furthermore, as

baby boomers age, the 55-years-and-older age group will become larger. Toossi stated that this will continue until most baby boomers retire and leave the labor force.

According to Clark and Ritter (2020), baby boomers—those born just after World War II, from 1946 to 1964—have reached or surpassed the age of retirement or are approaching it. Clark and Ritter pointed out that the “percentage of the labor force aged 55 or older almost doubled in the last two decades” (p. 3), and this trend is projected to continue. The aging of the population means two things. On the one hand, more people are retiring, and on the other hand, many of these older workers are choosing to work longer.

These findings and conclusions show that the staffing numbers continue a long-term trend of a large gap between vacancies and hires within government. In addition, they reinforce the critical challenges government faces in attracting and retaining talent. Succession planning, therefore, should continue to be at the forefront as the time for a paradigm shift is already late.

Implication for Action 5

Hiring was the only statistically significant difference between civil service merit and EAW personnel systems.

Although PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system indicate areas for growth, this also holds true for EAW, especially in recruitment, promotion, retention, and succession planning. Although hiring was statistically significant between the two personnel systems, improvement can always be made.

Proponents of HRM reform rely primarily on theories, or a small data set, that government reform yields significant differences compared to traditional bureaucratic civil service merit system governments. The data and comments revealed in this survey regarding the NPM theoretical framework and consequently EAW, show that NPM and HRM reform starting in the 1990s is not on par with the findings in this study. This study has revealed that civil service merit system competitive examinations do mediate PSHRA state and local governments' ability to hire the best candidate. Per the NPM theoretical framework, more than one variable out of five should be statistically significant between the two public sector personnel systems.

PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system indicated that they have all the issues discussed in Chapter 2, which included competitive examinations, the rule of three, the bureaucratic rules governing their civil service merit system, and the protection of labor unions. However, this can be reversed given the recognition of the ever-widening gap between the public and private sectors. It will take transformational change HR leaders to work with state governors and legislators to produce much needed transformational change among these five variables.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendation 1

The NPM theoretical framework, and consequently EAW, must be reevaluated in terms of effectiveness.

Although EAW is touted as being significantly different from civil service merit systems, hiring was the only statistically significant difference after running *z* scores against recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning. As a result,

those working within an EAW must reevaluate whether their system works as efficiently as possible. This study nearly entirely rejected the NPM theoretical framework because hiring was the only statistically significant variable between civil service merit and EAW systems. State governors, legislators, and local government leaders must pay more attention to both personnel systems' recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning practices. Those working in an EAW system must not automatically think that EAW means operating more efficiently than a civil service merit system. More research is needed to explore what has changed since NPM gained momentum in the 1990s.

Recommendation 2

Civil service merit systems act as a hindrance, but the difficulties are not substantially different from EAW systems.

The averages for recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention and how it dovetails into succession planning were lower for those working within a civil service merit system, but not substantially lower than within an EAW system. State and local government PSHRA professionals indicated that they recognize the difficulties of working within a civil service merit system but are trying hard to overcome these challenges. Those working within a civil service merit system must look for windows of opportunity for a paradigm shift to implement flexibility into their personnel system.

Recommendation 3

Further research using a qualitative and/or mixed methods study is needed.

This study focused on quantitative methods with optional comments after each question. A qualitative or mixed methods study may lend more insights as to why the

only statistically significant difference between the two personnel systems was in hiring. Further research that focuses on exploring why the only statistically significant difference between the two public sector personnel systems was in hiring among the five variables would help capture why EAW did not entirely support the NPM theoretical framework, and if red tape has indeed been reduced or eliminated. As the EAW comments in this survey indicated, they do not lend themselves to statistically significantly less bureaucracy with flexibility by mirroring private sector practices, which is a major component of the NPM theoretical framework. The comments from PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a state or local government EAW system were nearly identical to those PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit system, except in hiring. This should not be the case per the NPM theoretical framework.

Recommendation 4

State and local governments must reassess their succession planning strategies (or lack thereof) or the public sector will continue to fall behind the private sector.

PSHRA state and local government professionals working within a civil service merit and EAW system must continue to reevaluate their ability to effectively engage in succession planning. The averages for both civil service merit and EAW systems were dismal in this research study, which is of great concern. Although PSHRA survey respondents' comments from the survey stated that succession planning is complex because of the lack of staff to do the work and bureaucratic rules, further research must focus on why succession planning is placed on the back burner with both personnel systems. PSHRA and similar government associations need to continue work with state

governors and legislators about the importance of this study's findings and how their respective personnel system will endure given the competitiveness to attract talent from the private sector. Based on the respondents' comments from this survey, it is apparent that PSHRA state and local government professionals in both personnel systems desire to engage in effective succession planning, but neither know how, do not have the staff to allocate to this effort, and/or do not have the proper training.

Succession planning is supposed to be implemented in all employment sectors as it ensures that filling open positions due to retirements and transferrable knowledge are done effectively. Because of the ever-widening employment gap between the private and public sector, many governments face the challenge of providing service delivery continuity and consistency.

Recommendation 5

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics must be continually referred to for understanding the public and private sector employment gap.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics analyzes monthly job openings, hirings, and separations between the public and the private sectors. Compared to the private sector, the ratios are not impressive for the public sector. All PSHRA members and nonmembers must continue to pay close attention to these ratios and the changing data to determine the temperature of the continual gap between the private and public sectors.

Recommendation 6

Transformational change leadership is critical to keep up with the private sector.

Although the averages are high for both civil service merit and EAW personnel systems regarding the need for transformational change leadership to keep up with the

private sector, little transformational change is occurring within state and local governments when focusing on recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning. Transformational change leadership is paramount for an effective government, so it is not overburdened with bureaucratic rules and the mentality of “this is the way we always have done it.” All public sector leaders, including the governor of each state and legislators, must acknowledge this need because it will help with all the issues previously outlined. Without transformational change leadership, there will be no improvement in the five variables analyzed for this study. The private sector will continue to triumph over the public sector, and citizens in state and local governments will only get more frustrated with government’s lack of efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommendation 7

Further research must be done to assess the strength of state and local government labor unions and determine what transformational change leadership would look like within their respective personnel system to improve upon the effectiveness of recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning. Labor unions must be brought into these important conversations regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning, with a focus on transformational change leadership and why it is needed.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

State and local governments are under extraordinary pressure to improve their recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention practices. Moreover, more effort must be directed toward effective succession planning, yet as found in this study, proper succession planning rarely occurs within state and local governments. Using z scores, the

researcher compared the means of PSHRA state and local government professionals working within civil service merit and EAW systems. The five variables analyzed were recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and succession planning. Hiring was the only statistically significant difference between both personnel systems. Therefore, civil service merit competitive examinations mediate the ability of PSHRA state and local government professionals to hire the most qualified candidate for the job. In addition, although the need for transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector averaged high between both personnel systems, very little transformational change is occurring. Based on the findings of this study, transformational change leadership is undoubtedly the key to improve upon the five analyzed variables within this study.

This study is significant because of the lack of scholarly literature focusing on the similarities and differences between public sector civil service merit and EAW personnel systems. Because the only statistically significant difference between the two public sector personnel systems was in hiring, that succession planning is in dire need of improvement, that transformational change leadership is crucial in improving all five variables analyzed in this study, scholars and practitioners alike will find this study to be eye-opening and hopefully questions will arise as to why there are not more statistically significant differences between public sector civil service merit and EAW personnel systems. In theory, there should be more statistically significant differences with a clear path that shows how EAW is cutting red tape and how flexibility is working within its system, bypassing bureaucratic rules and regulations. No such distinction exists within this study, except for hiring. Although comments for all survey questions were optional, there was an overarching bureaucratic theme regarding recruitment, promotion, retention,

and succession planning for both personnel systems, apart from hiring. The fundamental question becomes, “What has happened to the NPM and consequently EAW since it was embraced in the 1990s?”

A mixed methods study or qualitative research that interviews PSHRA state and local government professionals working within public sector civil service merit and EAW personnel systems throughout the United States (not a single state or region) would be a logical next step so that the myriads of barriers may be revealed and further studied.

This study found that when using z scores, recruitment, promotion, retention, and succession planning were not statistically different between public sector civil service merit and EAW personnel systems, but hiring was. The NPM theoretical framework, and consequently EAW, suggests that more than one variable, if not all, should be statistically significant for the NPM theoretical framework to be validated. Therefore, this study nearly entirely debunks NPM and HRM reform, which is a major finding that is multidisciplinary with a plethora of ramifications and lingering questions that need to be further researched.

At the time of this study, I was a career public servant for New York State (NYS) government for over 22 years, working within a civil service merit system. I have been part of the positive and the negative aspects of working within a civil service merit system. I have taken many NYS government oral and written civil service examinations, scoring higher on some examinations than others. When I sign up for an NYS competitive examination, I know the approximate five subjects that will be covered and am given only a few practice questions. There is no way for me to thoroughly study for my examination. Competitive examinations cost \$20–\$50 per examination and can have

more than 60 questions each, varying in the number and areas of subjects covered. All written competitive examinations use scantrons, are timed, and have several proctors within the testing room. My score and how I fall within the list of scores for the title has taken 3–8 months to receive. Once the list is established, some of these civil service merit competitive examination lists (scores) last 4–8 years, depending on the title. Some NYS agencies are actively hiring from these lists, and others are not because of a lack of funds, no vacancies, the rule of three, and/or list blockers.

I started my career working for the NYS Department of Civil Service, Division of Classification and Compensation, in 2005. The NYS Department of Civil Service is the central HR agency for the NYS government’s executive branch, serving approximately 140,000 employees. The NYS Department of Civil Service’s mission is “to build tomorrow’s workforce today by promoting a diverse, inclusive, and talented workforce. We lead and deliver world-class workforce management strategies by providing innovative solutions based on merit, fitness, and equality of opportunity” (NYS, Department of Civil Service, n.d., para. 2).

As a Classification and Pay Analyst, I analyzed requests to classify and allocate new positions or change the classification allocation of existing positions and classes; completed out-of-title work determinations; gathered information from records, interviews, and job audits; discussed requests with agency personnel, officers, and program managers; made transfer appropriateness determinations; and assisted with the hazardous duty pay differential program. I appreciate having started my tenure with the NYS Department of Civil Service as I understand the difficulties inherent within a civil service merit system.

In May 2023, with the support of NYS labor unions, the New York Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement (NY HELP) program was implemented by the NYS Governor's Office and the NYS Department of Civil Service to fill vacant NYS titles and positions without a civil service merit system examination, mostly titles in health and safety. In May 2024, the program was expanded to include more job titles, and the program was renamed the New York Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement Statewide (NY HELPS) program. The NY HELPS program allows NYS agencies to hire quickly without civil service merit system examinations and to hire the most qualified candidates while focusing on diversity. In addition, all examination fees have been temporarily waived from July 2023 to December 2025 (New York State, 2023). The NYS Department of Civil Service oversees implementing and upholding the NY HELPS program. New York State is on par with the findings of my research study, as civil service merit competitive examinations do mediate the ability for HR professionals and managers to hire the most qualified candidates, and NYS is trying to remedy this issue temporarily for a limited number of titles/positions. The duration of the NY HELPS program is scheduled to end in May 2025. The New York State Governor's Office and the NYS Department of Civil Service will determine if the NY HELPS program should continue beyond May 2025.

I have been devoted to studying the NPM theoretical framework and the reinventing government movement since 2000. My three theses for my master's degrees focused on the NPM theoretical framework. My first master's thesis focused on Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) *Reinventing Government*, where I revisited the empirical claims made by the authors, which illustrated Fairfield, California, as one of the first cities to

implement an entrepreneurial form of government and effectively adopt NPM. I have also extensively researched, written, and presented my research findings on the American bureaucracy and the benefits of public and private partnerships for improving public sector efficiencies.

Along with my over 22 years of NYS government work experience, the combination of the two makes me see through two lenses: as an academic scholar and practitioner. My NYS government tenure and academic pursuits were the backbone of this dissertation. I had a strong passion to research whether EAW personnel systems had statistically significant differences among the five variables found in this study when compared to civil service merit systems. I was genuinely astonished at the findings and conclusions found in my research study. I had biases, but I let the data do the talking and scrutinized every survey to ensure data integrity.

This study solidified my commitment as both an academic scholar and a practitioner to continue this type of research, as there is a strong need to continue to dig into the NPM theoretical framework and HRM reform. This study renewed my passion for enhancing state and local government efficiencies and my commitment to ensuring both sides of the coin are represented in my research.

I want to thank Cara Woodson Welch, Esq., PSHRA CEO, for helping me get the word out to PSRHA state and local government members to take my survey and for making my study possible. In addition, I thank the PSHRA state and local government professionals who completed my survey. I am honored to present my research at the PSHRA Annual Conference in Washington, DC, in September 2024 (see Appendix J).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrix

#	Authors	Weber	Bass	Burns	4Is	Well-being	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Job Embeds-ses	Lack of Power	Transformational	Transactional	Command-and-Control	Law	Exams	Proponents of Reform	Opponents of Reform	History	Uses in Studies	EAW	Ethics	NPM	Recruiting, hiring, promotion, retention, succession planning	Importance	Yes
1	Aberbach, J. D., & Rockman, B. A. (2000).									X	X	X			X		X				X	X	X	X
2	Alaugh, W. (2011).								X															
3	Alonso, J. M., Clifton, J., & Díaz-Fuentes, D. (2015).														X	X					X	X	X	X
4	Alshenqri, M., Shahwan-Akl, L., & Maude, P. (2017).					X	X			X														X
5	Anderson, D., & Ackerman Anderson, L. A. (2010).									X	X	X												
6	Ash, K., & Rahn, M. (with Stephens, R.). (2020).																					X	X	
7	Ban, C. (1995).									X	X	X			X	X								
8	Basic, L. (2018).						X																	X
9	Bass, B. M. (1985).		X							X														
10	Bass, B. M. (1990).		X							X														
11	Bass, B. M. (1997).									X	X													
12	Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1994).									X	X													
13	Bass, B. M., & Bass, R. (2008).																							
14	Beer, M., Cannon, M. D., Baron, J. N., Duley, P. R., Gerhart, B., Heneman, H. G., III, Kochan, T., Ledford, G. E., Jr., & Locke, E. A. (2004).															X								X
15	Behr, R. D. (2001).																							X
16	Bhines, L., & Gould, W. S. (2009).																X					X	X	X
17	Bojang, M. B. (2020).																							X
18	Boris, S. F. (2014).								X						X									X
19	Bowman, J. S., & West, J. P. (2007).														X	X	X			X				X
20	Brass, M., & Hondeghem, A. (2005).														X									X
21	Brewer, G. A., & Kellough, J. E. (2016).														X									X
22	Brown, K. (2004).																							X
23	Burns, J. M. (1978).																							
24	Bussis, M. (2018).							X	X							X								X
25	Caldwell, D. (1978).														x									X
26	Chandler, M. T. (2016).														X							X	X	
27	Clark, R. L., & Riter, B. M. (2020).																					X		
28	Cogburn, J. D., Battaglio, R. P., Jr., Bowman, J. S., Condrey, S. E., Goodman, D., & West, J. P. (2010).														X				X			X		
29	Condrey, S. E., & Battaglio, R. P. (2007).															X						X		
30	Cooper, C. A. (2018).																				X	X	X	X
31	Creswell, J. W. (2014).																							X
32	Daghera, S. (2022).									X														X
33	Endreich, B. L. (1997).														X									X
34	Falkrud, I. (2015).																							X
35	Falla, S. (2024).														C							X	X	
36	Gardner, G. (1977).												X											X
37	Gedda-Taylor, H. (2019).														X									X
38	Gibbs, D. (2020).														X	X			X	X	X	X		X
39	Goodman, D., & Cohen, G. (2018).																							X
40	Goodman, D., & French, P. E. (2011).																							X

	Synthesis Matrix	Retention						Leadership			Merit Systems and Competitive Examinations				NPM						More Research Needed			
#	Authors	Weber	Bass	Burns	4Is	Well-being	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Job Embedment	Lack of Power	Transformational	Transactional	Command-and-Control	Law	Exams	Proponents of Reform	Opponents of Reform	History	Uses in Studies	EAW	Ethics	NPM	Recruiting, hiring, promotion, retention, succession planning	Importance	Yes
41	Gosssett, C. W. (2003).									X					X		X	X			X		X	
42	Green, R., Forbis, R., Golden, A., Nelson, S. L., & Robinson, J. (2006).														X	X				X	X	X	X	X
43	Greenan, N., Lanfranchi, J., L'Horty, Y., Nancy, M., & Piémé, G. (2019).														X									X
44	Gosssett, C. W. (2003).														X									X
45	Green, R., Forbis, R., Golden, A., Nelson, S. L., & Robinson, J. (2006).														X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
46	Greenan, N., Lanfranchi, J., L'Horty, Y., Nancy, M., & Piémé, G. (2019).																					X	X	
47	Gunnink, A. L. (2001).									X		X			X			X	X		X		X	X
48	Hijal-Moghrabi, I., Sabharwal, M., & Berman, E. M. (2017).																							X
49	Herzberg, F. (1964).		X	X			X	X		X												X		
50	Hirschman, A. O. (1970).									X					X									
51	Holm, B. C., Mitchell, T. R., & Lee, T. W. (2006).							X																X
52	Hood, C. (1991).																							
53	House, R. J. (1977).							X		X														
54	Ihara, P. (2016).																							X
55	International Personnel Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR). (2019).																X	X			X		X	X
56	Jemal, H., & Warrack, A. (2019).																							
57	Jiang, W., Wang, Z., Alim, M., Murad, M., Gid, F., & Ahmad Gil, S. (2022).							X		X	X	X			X						X		X	X
58	Johnson, T., & Lewis, G. B. (2020).										X	X		X			X				X		X	X
59	Judge, T. A., Woolf, E. F., Hurst, C., & Livingston, B. (2006).	X								X					X									X
60	Kalra, B. (2021).						X		X															X
61	Kent, D. F. (2000).									X	X	X			X			X	X		X		X	X
62	Kaufman, H. (1967).														X		X	X					X	
63	Kenton, W. (2004).																X					X		
64	Kett, J. (2013).														X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
65	Kett, D. F. (2000).									X					X		X	X			X		X	X
66	Kett, D. F. (2015).									X	X	X			X		X	X			X		X	X
67	Kett, D. F. (2016).														X							X	X	X
68	Kingdon, J. W. (2003).								X						X		X	X				X	X	X
69	Kobrick, P. (1993).							X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X
70	Kuhn, T. S. (1996).							X	X	X	X	X		X							X	X	X	X
71	Lapointe, V., & Van de Walle, S. (2020).									X	X	X					X		X		X	X	X	X
72	Lavigne, B. (2024).														X							X	X	
73	Lavigne, R. J., & Hays, S. W. (2004).											X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
74	Light, P. (1997).	X								X	X	X			X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
75	MacKenzie, K., & Pantelakis, A. (2023)														X							X		
76	Marrelli, A. F. (2022).																							X
77	Maslow, A. H. (1943).						X																	
78	Maslow, A. H. (1954).						X		X		X	X												
79	McCleskey, J. A. (2014).		X	X	X						X												X	X
80	McMillan, J., & Schumacher, S. (2010).																X				X	X	X	

	Synthesis Matrix	Retention							Leadership			Merit Systems and Competitive Examinations					NPM						More Research Needed	
#	Authors	Weber	Bass	Burns	4Is	Well-being	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Job Embedment	Lack of Power	Transformational	Transactional	Command-and-Control	Law	Exams	Proponents of Reform	Opponents of Reform	History	Uses in Studies	EAW	Ethics	NPM	Recruiting, hiring, promotion, retention, succession planning	Importance	Yes
81	Mik, F. (2010).										X	X			X	X								
82	Mission Square Research Institute. (2016).																						X	X
83	Mission Square Research Institute. (2023).									X	X	X			X				X		X	X	X	X
84	Mitchell, T. R., Holom, B. C., Lee, T. W., Sahlynski, C. J., & Erez, M. (2001).					X		X											X					X
85	National Academy of Public Administration (2020).																		X					X
86	National Archives and Records Administration. (2024).												X									X		
87	New York State, Career Mobility Office. (n.d.).										X													
88	New York State, Department of Civil Service. (n.d.).										X													
89	New York State Governor's Office. (2023).										X								X					
90	Office of Personnel Management. (2019).												X											
91	O'Neill, J. R. J., & Nalbandian, J. (2018).							X		X					X				X			X		X
92	Osborne, D., & Gaebler, T. (1992).																							X
93	Osborne, D., & Hutchinson, P. (2004).																							X
94	Osborne, D., & Plastrik, P. (1994).														X					X	X	X	X	X
95	Park, S., & Liang, J. (2020).																X	X	X			X	X	X
96	Patten, M. L. (2017).																	X				X	X	X
97	Pfiffner, J. (2004).										X	X			X	X	X				X	X	X	X
98	Postell, J. (2020).								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
99	Pressman, J. L., & Wildavsky, A. (1984).										X	X	X	X			X					X	X	X
100	Robertson, J. (n.d.).									X	X	X			X	X		X				X	X	X
101	Rubai, A. V. S., & Camões, P. J. (2003).										X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
102	Saeed, F., & You, J. (2021).									X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
103	Saras, E. S., & Ginsburg, S. G. (1973).										X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
104	Shafir, J. M. (1973).										X	X					X			X		X	X	X
105	Sherk, J. (2021).									X	X	X			X			X	X		X	X	X	X
106	Sherk, J. (2022).									X	X	X			X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
107	Shi, S. (2023).									X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
108	Slam, D.-S. (2001).										X	X			X		X	X	X			X	X	X
109	Southworth, D. (2000).						X	X			X	X		X			X	X			X	X	X	X
110	Steindóttir, B. D., Nestad, C. G. L., & Magnúsdóttir, K. P. (2021).						X	X			X	X					X	X	X		X		X	X
111	Sun, S.-R. (2021).							X		X	X	X			X			X			X			
112	Sundell, A. (2014).							X			X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X
113	Thompson, F. J. (2003).	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
114	Thompson, J. R. (2021).							X	X	X	X	X		X	X				X		X	X	X	X
115	Todtem, R., Barnes, B., & Oswald, C. (2012).										X													
116	Toossi, M. (2024).														X			X			X	X	X	X
117	Trin, G., & Valotti, G. (Eds.). (2012).														X		X	X			X	X	X	X
118	Tupper, H., & Ellis, S. (2022).							X		X		X			X			X	X		X	X	X	X
119	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024).												X											
120	U.S. General Accounting Office. (1995).												X	X										

Synthesis Matrix		Retention								Leadership			Merit Systems and Competitive Examinations				NPM						More Research Needed	
#	Authors	Weber	Bass	Burns	4Is	Well-being	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Job Embedness	Lack of Power	Transformational	Transactional	Command-and-Control	Law	Exams	Proponents of Reform	Opponents of Reform	History	Uses in Studies	EAW	Ethics	NPM	Recruiting, hiring, promotion, retention, succession planning	Importance	Yes
121	U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. (n.d.).												X											
122	Van Riper, P. P. (1958).	X	X	X	X	X	X										X	X						
123	Walters, J. (2002).									X	X	X			X			X	X		X	X	X	X
124	Wang, T.-M., van Witteloostuijn, A., & Heine, F. (2020).	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X					X	X					X	X
125	Weber, M. (1946).	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X			X		X	X
126	Wiesen, J., Abrams, N., & McAttee, S. A. (1990).													X				X				X	X	X
127	Wiesman, J., & Baker, E. L. (2013).						X	X	X						X						X	X	X	X
128	Wilkinson, B. (2007).									X	X	X			X						X	X	X	X
129	Wilson, J. Q. (1989).	X								X					X									
130	Young, G., Franiel, J., Liss-Levinson, R., Scott, L., & Welch, C. W. (2022).																					X	X	
131	Zhavronkova, M., & Naranjo, K. (2022).														X							X		

APPENDIX B

PSHRA Research Permission Letter



Dear Angela Lauria -Gunnink

You are hereby granted permission to use my name and our organization name: Public Sector HR Association in your methodology chapter regarding my review of the questionnaire /survey you will be using for your dissertation : State Civil Service Merit Systems and Employment at Will: The Role of Transformational Leadership in Public Sector Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, Retention, and Succession Planning.

Thanks for asking and I look forward to reading your dissertation when it is completed.

Sincerely,

Cara Woodson Welch
CEO
Public Sector HR Association



APPENDIX C

Bill of Rights



UMASS GLOBAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMASS GLOBAL Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent



Informed Consent

It is important to read the following consent information carefully and click the agree box to continue. The survey will not open until you agree.

In the Informed Consent language below, "student" refers to the researcher who requested you to complete the survey.

INFORMATION ABOUT: The degree of importance regarding a leaders' behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Student

THE FOLLOWING WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE ELECTRONIC SURVEY:

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by a student, a doctoral student from the School of Education at UMass, Global. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the behaviors that leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this electronic survey, you can withdraw at any time.

This survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Your responses are confidential. The survey questions will pertain to your perceptions.

The results of this survey will be used for scholarly purposes only.

No information that identifies you will be released without your separate consent, and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and consent re-obtained. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.

I understand that the investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher. I understand that I may refuse to participate in or I may withdraw from this study at any time. I understand

that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, University of Massachusetts, Global, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949)341-7641.

If you have any questions about completing this survey or any aspects of this research, please contact the student at Angela Lauria-Gunnink at XXX-XXX-XXX. Alternatively, you can contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Carlos Guzman, at XXX-XXX-XXXX.


APPENDIX E


CITI Program Completion Certificate

		Completion Date 21-May-2022 Expiration Date N/A Record ID 49024154
This is to certify that:		
Angela Lauria-Gunnink		
Has completed the following CITI Program course:		Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.
Human Subjects Research (Curriculum Group)		
Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers (Course Learner Group)		
1 - Basic (Stage)		
Under requirements set by:		
University of Massachusetts Global		
 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative		
Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wd37899e5-34f3-4ab9-9600-dd5689031190-49024154		

APPENDIX F

UMass Institutional Review Board Approval

IRB Application Approved: Angela Lauria-Gunnink > 

 **Institutional Review Board** <my@umassglobal.edu>
to me, dlong, cguzman, irb ▾

Mon, Jan 8, 3:55 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Dear Angela Lauria-Gunnink,

Congratulations! Your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If you need to modify your IRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at IRB.umassglobal.edu

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank You,

IRB
Academic Affairs
UMass Global
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618
irb@umassglobal.edu
www.umassglobal.edu

This email is an automated notification. If you have questions please email us at irb@umassglobal.edu.

APPENDIX G

Research Question Alignment Table

<p>Research Question #1</p> <p>To what extent do PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government personnel system is effective with recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of state and local government employees?</p>	<p>Survey questions:</p> <p>Merit: 13, 14, 15, 16</p> <p>EAW: 19, 20, 21, 22</p>
<p>Research Question #2</p> <p>To what extent do state and local government PSHRA professionals agree that their state or local government's personnel system is helpful with effective succession planning when hiring new talent?</p>	<p>Survey questions:</p> <p>Merit: 17</p> <p>EAW: 23</p>
<p>Research Question #3</p> <p>To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change leadership is necessary regarding their personnel system's recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?</p>	<p>Survey question:</p> <p>25</p>
<p>Research Question #4</p>	<p>Survey question:</p> <p>26</p>

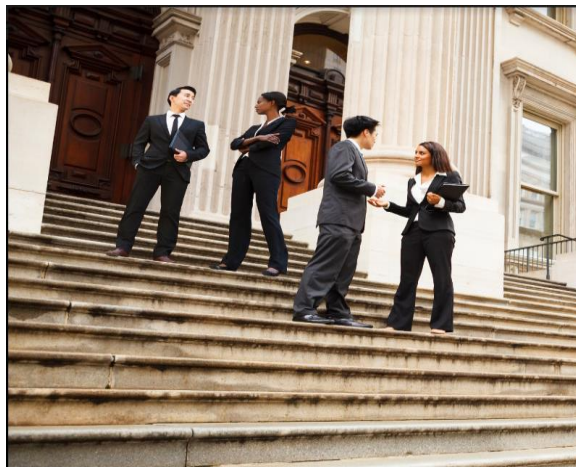
<p>To what extent do PSHRA state and local government professionals agree that transformational change is occurring within their personnel system regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning to keep up with the private sector?</p>	
<p>Research Question #5</p> <p>To what degree are there differences between PSHRA state and local government professionals regarding their personnel system related to recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and effective succession planning?</p>	<p>Survey questions:</p> <p>Merit: 13, 14, 15, 16</p> <p>EAW: 19, 20, 21, 22</p>

APPENDIX H

Survey Participation Blast Emails

Date: Mon, Feb 12, 2024 at 12:39 PM

Subject: Take a Short Survey - Win a Gift Card!



Greetings, PSHRA members. My name is Angela Lauria-Gunnink, and I am a Doctoral student in Education (Ed.D.) at UMass Global. And I invite PSHRA members to take my brief doctoral dissertation survey on the PSHRA open forum.

This study will seek a deeper understanding of the extent to which each personnel employment system allows state and local government HR professionals to recruit, hire, promote and retain staff, how their respective personnel system impacts succession planning, and the need for transformational leadership to keep up with the private sector.

AND, as a thank you, if you complete the survey by **COB Feb. 16**, you are free to accept or decline a \$5 e-gift card, or donate that \$5 to a charity of your choice.

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE

Individual Chapter Emails sent by the Researcher in February 2024

Dear PSHRA State and Local Government Members:

My name is Angela Lauria-Gunnink and I am a Doctoral student in Education (Ed.D.) at UMass Global. Cara Woodson Welch, Esq. (CEO, PSHRA) has permitted me to send out my doctoral dissertation survey to PSHRA members. This quantitative research will compare state and local government HR professionals who are members of the Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA), working within a merit civil service system or employment at will (EAW) system. This study will seek a deeper understanding of the extent to which each personnel employment system allows state and local government HR professionals to recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff, how their respective personnel system impacts succession planning, and the need for transformational leadership to keep up with the private sector.

Minimum Qualifications:

Each PSHRA state and local member survey respondent must be a national member and/or a local chapter member in good standing and work within the continental United States. Additionally, each state and local government PSHRA survey respondent must have at least two (2) years of full-time Human Resources (HR) experience in one or more of the following practice areas: recruitment, hiring, retention, promoting, benefits administration, labor management, classification and compensation, testing, and/or retaining public sector staff that are either competitive or noncompetitive and know how their respective personnel system impacts succession planning and transformational change.

Survey Due Date:

Please complete this survey no later than COB February 16, 2024. Please complete this survey only once and complete it in one sitting. The survey will take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Contact Information:

For questions regarding this survey, please get in touch with me at XX@gmail.com. If you want a copy of your survey responses, don't hesitate to contact me, and I will email you a copy.

Thank you:

At the end of this survey, you can accept/decline a \$5 e-gift card or donate your \$5 to a charity as a thank you. Use the link sent to you via email and choose either the \$5 gift card to various stores or to donate your \$5 to one of several charities. This incentive is only for the first 100 survey respondents who accept it.

CLICK TO BEGIN SURVEY

APPENDIX I

PSHRA State and Local Government Survey

PSHRA State and Local Government Member Survey on Merit Systems and Employment at Will (EAW)

1. Welcome, Survey Purpose, Informed Consent, Minimum Qualifications, and Bill of Rights

Dear PSHRA State and Local Government Members:

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey for my doctoral dissertation at UMass Global. This quantitative research is to compare state and local government HR professionals who are members of the Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) working within a civil service merit civil service system or employment at will (EAW) system. This study will seek a deeper understanding of the extent to which each personnel employment system allows state and local government HR professionals to recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff, how their respective personnel system impacts succession planning, and the need for transformational change leadership to keep up with the private sector.

Informed Consent:

Please give consent to take this survey. If you do not give consent, you will be disqualified from the survey.

Minimum Qualifications:

Each PSHRA state and local government survey respondent must be a state and/or local chapter member in good standing and live within the continental United States. Additionally, each state and local government PSHRA survey respondent must have at least two (2) years of full-time Human Resources (HR) experience in one or more of the following practice areas: recruitment, hiring, retention, promoting, benefits administration, labor management, classification and compensation, testing, and/or retaining public sector staff that are either competitive or noncompetitive and know

how their respective personnel system impacts succession planning and transformational change.

Bill of Rights:

Each survey respondent must indicate that they understand the UMass Global Institutional Review Board Research Participant's Bill of Rights. If you do not understand, you will be disqualified from the survey.

Survey Due Date:

Please complete this survey no later than COB February 16, 2024. Please complete this survey only once and complete it in one sitting. Any duplicate or spam responses will be disqualified. The survey will take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Navigation:

All questions with an * are required questions. When navigating through the survey, use the previous and next buttons at the bottom of your page, not your browser's back/forward buttons.

Contact Information:

For questions regarding this survey, please get in touch with Angela Lauria-Gunnink at X. If you want a copy of your survey responses, please contact Angela and she will email you a copy.

Thank you:

At the end of this survey, you can accept/decline a \$5 e-gift card or donate your \$5 to a charity as a thank you. Use the link sent to you via email and choose either the \$5 gift card to various stores or to donate your \$5 to one of several charities. This incentive is only for the first 100 survey respondents who accept it.

Thank you for completing this important survey!

*** 1. Informed Consent**

It is important to read the following consent information carefully and click the agree box to continue. The survey will not open until you agree.

In the Informed Consent language below, "student" refers to the researcher who requested you to complete the survey.

INFORMATION ABOUT: The degree of importance regarding a leaders' behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Student

THE FOLLOWING WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE ELECTRONIC SURVEY:

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by a student, a doctoral student from the School of Education at UMass, Global. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the behaviors that leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this electronic survey, you can withdraw at any time.

This survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

Your responses are confidential. The survey questions will pertain to your perceptions.

The results of this survey will be used for scholarly purposes only.

No information that identifies you will be released without your separate consent, and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and consent re-obtained. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.

I understand that the investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher. I understand that I may refuse to participate in or I may withdraw from this study at any time. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, University of Massachusetts, Global, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

If you have any questions about completing this survey or any aspects of this research, please contact the student at Angela Lauria-Gunnink at alauriag@mail.umassglobal.edu or (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Alternatively, you can contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Carlos Guzman, at (949) 903-2058 or Carlos.Guzman@umassglobal.edu.

Please give your consent to the researcher to take this survey. If you do not give consent, you will be disqualified from taking this survey.

- ☐ Yes, I give consent.
- ☐ No, I do not give consent.

PSHRA State and Local Government Member Survey on Merit Systems and Employment at Will (EAW)

2. Minimum Qualifications

* 2. Each PSHRA state and local government survey respondent must be a state and/or local chapter member in good standing and work within the continental United States. Additionally, each state and local government PSHRA survey respondent must have at least two (2) years of full-time Human Resources (HR) experience in one or more of the following practice areas: recruitment, hiring, retention, promoting, benefits administration, labor management, classification and compensation, testing, and/or retaining public sector staff that are either competitive or noncompetitive and know how their respective personnel system impacts succession planning and transformational change.

Please indicate that you meet this criteria below. If not, you will be disqualified from taking this survey.

- ☐ Yes, I am a state or local government PSHRA member in good standing and meet the minimum qualifications.
- ☐ No, I am not a state or local government PSHRA member in good standing and do not meet the minimum qualifications.

PSHRA State and Local Government Member Survey on Merit Systems and Employment at Will (EAW)

3. UMass Global Institutional Review Board Research Participant's Bill of

* 3. Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMASS GLOBAL Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Please indicate that you understand the UMass Global Institutional Review Board Research Participant's Bill of Rights. If not, you will be disqualified for taking this survey.

- ☐ Yes, I understand the UMass Global Institutional Review Board Research Participant's Bill of Rights.
- ☐ No, I do not understand the UMass Global Institutional Review Board Research Participant's Bill of Rights.

PSHRA State and Local Government Member Survey on Merit Systems and Employment at Will (EAW)

4. Personal Information:

If you would like a copy of your survey responses, please enter your contact information below.

4. Personal Information: This optional information will be not be used for any purpose other than informational.

First Name (Optional):

Last Name (Optional):

Email (Optional):

Phone Number with Area code (Optional):

* 5. How many years have you been working in government HR?

- ☐ 2-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21+ years

* 6. What is your area of HR expertise (or closest area) - select all that apply

- ☐ Benefits administration
- ☐ Classification and Compensation
- ☐ Hiring of public sector staff
- ☐ Labor Management
- ☐ Promotions of public sector staff
- ☐ Recruitment of public sector staff
- ☐ Retention of public sector staff
- ☐ Testing

Other (please specify)

* 7. What is your HR title?

* 8. What is your gender?

☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Other Prefer not to identify

9. I am a:

☐ PSHRA state member

☐ PSHRA local government member

* 10. What state do you work in as a HR professional?

* 11. Trap question due to robots and spammers: What is 7+5? If you choose incorrectly, you will be disqualified from this survey.

☐ 4

☐ 8

☐ 12

☐ 16

☐ None of the above

* 12. What type of personnel system do you work within when hiring public sector employees?

☐ Primarily a civil service merit system except for those exempted officers who are appointed and employees of the legislative and judicial branches.

☐ Primarily employment at will (EAW) except for those exempted officers who are appointed and employees of the legislative and judicial branches.

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5. Merit System

For those working within primarily a civil service merit system, except for those exempted officers who are appointed and employees of the legislative and judicial branches, how do competitive examinations within a merit system impact the following questions:

5. Merit System

For those working within primarily a civil service merit system, except for those exempted officers who are appointed and employees of the legislative and judicial branches, how do competitive examinations within a merit system impact the following questions:

* 13. To what extent do you agree that your merit system effectively *recruits* the most qualified candidates for job openings?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

* 14. To what extent do you agree that your merit system effectively *hires* the most qualified candidates?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

* 15. To what extent do you agree that your merit system effectively *promotes* qualified candidates?

- ☐ Strongly Agree

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a robot or spammer.

* 16. To what extent do you agree that your merit system effectively *retains* the most qualified candidates?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are

not a robot or spammer.

* 17. To what extent do you agree that your merit system is helpful with effective *succession planning*?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

* 18. Trap question due to robots and spammers: Choose the letter C below. If you choose incorrectly, you will be disqualified from this survey.

- ☐ A

- ☐ C
- ☐ R
- ☐ L
- ☐ None of the above

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6. Employment at Will (EAW) system

For those working within primarily within an employment at will (EAW) personnel system, except for those exempted officers who are appointed and employees of the legislative and judicial branches, how does the lack of competitive examinations impact the following:

* 19. To what extent do you agree that your EAW system effectively *recruits* the most qualified candidates for job openings?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

* 20. To what extent do you agree that your EAW effectively *hires* the most qualified candidates?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

* 21. To what extent do you agree that your EAW system effectively *promotes* qualified candidates?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

* 22. To what extent do you agree that your EAW system effectively *retains* the most qualified candidates?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

* 23. To what extent do you agree that your EAW system is helpful with effective *succession planning*?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

* 24. Trap question due to robots and spammers: Choose the letter C below. If you choose incorrectly, you will be disqualified from this survey.

- ☐ R
- ☐ C
- ☐ T
- ☐ Z
- ☐ None of the above

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7. Transformational Change Leadership

Transformational change leadership can take many forms. Please consider this definition from Anderson and Anderson (2010) as you respond to the question below.

“Transformational change leadership requires conscious process thinking, intentionally attending to inputs, outputs, what has occurred historically, and how present actions can best support future steps in the change effort. This is distinct from project thinking and systems thinking, or the use of checklists or cookbooks for change. Through the conscious process thinking lens, leaders see their organizations as multi-dimensional, interconnected living systems in constant and perpetual motion — all quadrants and all levels. They see them as ever-evolving and constantly seek to advance their development. In designing their transformational change processes, they account for the fact that their best - laid plans will be constantly adjusted to the realities that occur at all levels of the organization as change proceeds” (Anderson, D., & Ackerman Anderson, L. A., p. 20).

* 25. To what degree do you agree that transformational change leadership is important regarding state human resource reform with regard to keeping up with the private sector and their hiring practices?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

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8. Transformational Change

Transformational change can take many forms. Please consider this definition from Anderson and Anderson (2010) as you respond to questions below.

“Transformational change calls for leaders and employees to transform themselves— changing their mindsets and fundamental assumptions about reality; their ways of being, working, and relating; their behavior and style; and their level of personal empowerment and effectiveness at causing or supporting things to happen in the organization. We call this process of personal change self - mastery, which implies that the individual leader must choose to change, be aware of what needs to change, and be empowered to do so” (Anderson, D., & Ackerman Anderson, L. A., p. 16).

* 26. Is transformational change currently occurring within your personnel system regarding the following? Select the most appropriate answer per question:

	Transformational change is happening and is a priority	Transformational change is occurring but is slow and not a priority	Some transformational change is occurring	No transformational change is occurring	Unsure
The ability to <i>recruit</i> qualified candidates?					
The ability to <i>hire</i> the most qualified candidates?					
The ability to offer <i>promotional</i> opportunities?					
The ability to <i>retain</i> the most qualified candidates?					
The ability to properly and effectively <i>succession plan</i> ?					

* Comments (optional) - While optional, comments help ensure you are not a spammer.

27. Trap question due to robots and spammers: Choose the word Cat below. If you choose incorrectly, you will be disqualified from this survey.

- ☐ Cat
- ☐ Dog
- ☐ Mouse
- ☐ Elephant
- ☐ None of the above

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9. Additional Comments (Optional):

28. Please share any other comments you have below:

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* 29. If you are one of the first 100 survey respondents, would you like to accept or decline a \$5 e-gift card to various stores or donate your \$5 to a selected charity as a thank you for completing your survey? If yes to either, your email will be required on the next page. Upon acceptance of your survey, the email address you input will be used to send your e-gift card/charity donation link. The e-gift card/donation link will be emailed to you within 72 hours. Please check your junk email if you do not see a \$5 e-gift card email in your inbox.

Please follow the instructions provided within the email. The researcher is not responsible for lost, stolen, or misdirected e-gift cards. Your gift card will be good for 30 days upon receipt.

This incentive is only for the 100 survey respondents who accept it. Any duplicate or spam responses will be disqualified.

☐ Yes, I accept my \$5 e-gift card or want to donate to a selected charity. Your email is required on the next page. If you are one of the first 100 survey respondents who accepts this incentive, within 72 hours you will receive your e-gift card/charity donation link via email. Once you receive your reward via email, please follow the instructions on how to claim your e-gift card or how to donate to a charity.

☐ No, I decline my \$5 e-gift card and do not want to donate it.

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11. E-Gift Card or Donation to a Charity as a Thank You

* 30. Upon acceptance of your survey, if you are one of the first 100 survey respondents who accept this incentive, the email address you enter below will be used to send your e-gift card/charity donation link. The e-gift card/donation link will be emailed to you within 72 hours. Please check your junk email if you do not see a \$5 e-gift card email in your inbox. Please follow the instructions provided within the email. The researcher is not responsible for lost, stolen, or misdirected e-gift cards. Your gift card will be good for 30 days upon receipt. Please follow the instructions provided within the email.

Ensure that your email is entered correctly. If possible, using a state or local government email address will distinguish you from robots and spammers. The researcher is not responsible for lost, stolen, or misdirected e-gift cards. Your e-gift card/donation link will be good for 30 days upon receipt.

This incentive is only for the first 100 survey respondents who accept it. Any duplicate or spam responses will be disqualified.

Please send my thank you gift of a \$5 e-gift card or \$5 charity donation link to:

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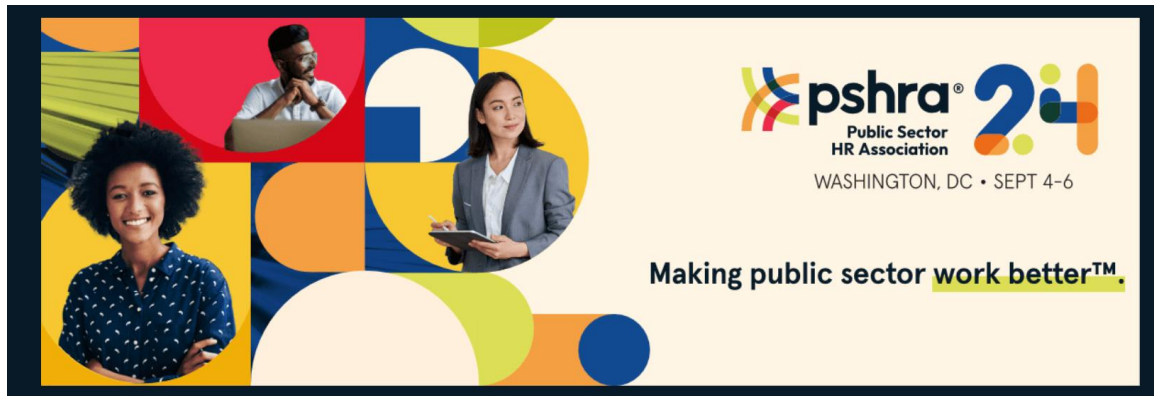
12. **Thank you!**

Thank you for your time in taking this short survey! This dissertation will be available for all PSHRA members as the researcher will post the link to her dissertation on the PSHRA open forum during the fall of 2024.

Please click the done button below to complete this survey.

APPENDIX J

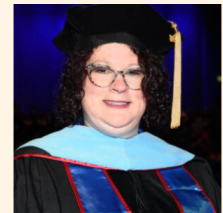
PSHRA 2024 Annual Conference Presentation



Civil Service Merit and Employment at Will Personnel Systems: The Role of New Public Management and Transformational Leadership in Public Sector Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, Retention and Succession Planning

ANGELA LAURIA-GUNNINK - NEW YORK STATE PROJECT MANAGER, UMASS GLOBAL

Over the past 30+ years, there has been much written about New Public Management (NPM) and the shift some public agencies have made to rid themselves from the old, rule-bound Weberian form of government. This presentation will focus on the 2024 PSHRA survey results which focused on NPM and Human Resources Management (HRM). The purpose of this non-experimental, descriptive, and comparative research aimed to compare state and local government HR professionals who are members of the Public Sector Human Resource Association (PSHRA) who work within a state or local government merit civil service system and PSHRA HR professionals working within a state or local government employment at will (EAW) system. Furthermore, this national study examined the extent to which each personnel employment system allows state and local government PSHRA HR professionals to recruit, hire, promote, and retain staff; how their respective personnel system impacts succession planning; and the need for transformational leadership to keep up with the private sector.



Angela Lauria-Gunnink