

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Exploratory Comparative Review of the Revolving Door Phenomenon in Government Across Four Aspects

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to compare the revolving door phenomenon across different types of literature and research. This investigation was conducted through a comprehensive literature review encompassing four categories: legal, academic, governmental, and political-economic research. The review of these various bodies of literature unveiled differing approaches to addressing the revolving door phenomenon. Governmental studies primarily centered on the operational aspects of government and scrutinized whether resources were potentially misused or squandered due to the revolving door. Conversely, legal and academic research placed their emphasis on ethical concerns, conflicts of interest, and the public's perception of government. They explored the possibility that political appointees might prioritize their own careers over the needs and desires of citizens. The diverse array of issues and concerns examined in the reviewed research offered a comprehensive perspective on the revolving door phenomenon. In the realm of political-economic literature, the revolving door was seen as a means to attract talent and expertise to government roles. However, it also raised apprehensions about conflicts of interest and the potential for regulatory capture.

**Keywords:** Revolving door, Government, Literature review, Selected comparative review

The revolving door between business and politics requires more academic attention as it has tremendous economic implications for business-government relations. The revolving door phenomenon, where individuals transition between roles in government and the private sector, has received considerable attention, particularly within the executive branch of government. However, it remains an underexplored area in academic research. This phenomenon carries significant economic implications for the relationship between businesses and government. Previous studies have indicated that

hiring individuals with revolving door experience can be advantageous because they bring valuable political connections and expertise to their new employers (e.g., Bertrand et al., 2014; McCrain, 2018;).

The revolving door within the government can manifest in two primary ways. Firstly, individuals from the private sector may enter government roles where they are responsible for regulating or overseeing industries they were previously part of. Secondly, government employees may leave their positions to work in the private sector, leveraging their government

connections to lobby on behalf of their companies or industries (Danaher & Mark, 2003).

However, despite its importance, empirical research on the revolving door phenomenon is limited due to the reluctance of government officials to disclose their intentions regarding post-government employment. As a result, discussions surrounding the revolving door are often anecdotal and may not provide a comprehensive view of its extent within the federal government.

From a theoretical perspective, the revolving door phenomenon raises concerns about public trust in the executive branch, particularly regarding regulatory actions. It has the potential to erode trust as citizens may perceive that decisions are made in the interest of industries rather than the public good (Meghani & Kuzma, 2011). Thus, understanding the nature and implications of the revolving door phenomenon is crucial for maintaining public trust and the perceived integrity of the governance process (Revolving Door Working Group, 2005).

In light of these considerations, a comprehensive literature review on the revolving door phenomenon is essential to shed light on its nature, identify recurring themes, and provide insights into its impact on business-government relations and public trust in government actions. This study aims to compare the revolving door phenomena in different types of literature and research: legal, academic, governmental, and political-economic.

## Methodology

A comprehensive literature review methodology was employed to investigate the nature of the revolving door phenomenon within the executive branch of the federal government. The choice of a literature review approach was driven by its capacity to gather information from diverse sources spanning several years. The collected literature was classified into four main categories: legal, academic, governmental, and political-economic sources. This categorization allowed for a structured analysis of studies with similar themes and facilitated the identification of potential variations in research findings related to the revolving door phenomenon.

The literature for this study was sourced through systematic searches of academic databases, including Ebsco and Google Scholar, as well as archives of

reputable news outlets such as The Washington Post. Key search terms included “revolving door phenomenon,” “revolving door,” “executive branch,” and “government.”

A noteworthy decision was made regarding the time frame from which literature would be gathered. The investigation set its starting point in 1992 for several reasons. In that year, President Bill Clinton, upon taking office, announced his intention to implement a five-year ban on top political appointees transitioning to private-sector jobs involving lobbying their former government agencies (Ifill, 1992). This action signaled a significant move to address the revolving door phenomenon. Notably, President Barack Obama later issued similar orders aimed at curbing the revolving door (Heidt, 2011). Given these circumstances, a 30-year period from 1992 was deemed suitable for drawing upon literature for this review.

Finally, my analysis deliberately concentrated on a curated selection of around 30 papers and documents that were deemed highly relevant and encompassed the overarching theme of the revolving door phenomenon. This strategic choice aimed to enable an exploratory comparison of sources within each category, as opposed to conducting an exhaustive review of the entirety of the available literature.

## Comparative Review: Four Areas

### *Legal Research*

Much of the research that has been conducted over the past 20 years seems to be focused on the revolving door from a purely theoretical standpoint in terms of the themes of ethics and public perceptions (Greene, 1994). The focus of so much of the legal research seems to have been on potential ethics violations and the interaction between ethics and public perceptions (Johnson, 1999). The general concern has been the potential for government employees to act in an unethical manner with regard to the revolving door phenomenon (Cohen & Eimicke, 1995). However, it seems necessary to actually examine ethical concerns in relation to the realities associated with working in government

Baxter (2011) has noted that an increase in the regulatory regime within the federal government does create a unique legal situation because greater regulation means that people who are familiar with

the industries that are being regulated are needed to work in government. However, a greater level of relationship between the companies being regulated and the regulators raises the concern that improprieties may occur as the regulators may be more loyal or at least more concerned about the industries in which they worked, and are likely to return than the regulations that they are expected to carry out. The author also noted that one of the ways to overcome the problem of the increased revolving door within government is to enact rules to prevent former regulators from having direct involvement in specific actions in which they previously worked. However, Baxter (2011) also admitted, as others have admitted, that imposing rules to prevent the revolving door is not always successful and can create complications, such as the current situation involving the Obama Administration's granting of waivers to get around its own rules (Wilson et al., 2011; Heidt, 2011).

McGuire (2000) explained that his research has shown that many former law clerks of the United States Supreme Court have gone on to take private sector positions in which they engage in lobbying the Court in some way. However, he also stated that this is not surprising given the relatively small number of people who ever clerk for the Court and the nature of the work they perform. Even more, he argued that of all of the lawyers who lobby the Supreme Court, very few of them are actually former law clerks. In this regard, although there is a need to maintain the confidence of the public in the work of the Court and government agencies, in general, the revolving door phenomenon may not present the same problem or concern across all government agencies and branches.

DesNoyer (2004) noted that even though concerns about conflicts of interest between government employees and private sector companies have been a major concern, strict rules to stop the revolving door can hurt government agencies. The reason for this is that if people are prevented from involvement in the issues and policies they might work on while a government employee, they are not likely to want to take government jobs. They will be prevented from not being able to use their skills and knowledge once they leave a government position and return to the private sector. In turn, the public may lose confidence in government organizations because the people working within them are not the most knowledgeable about the industries and companies that are overseeing them.

Webber (1996) has also argued that although the revolving door phenomenon needs to be investigated, caution should be taken about implementing strict laws to stop the phenomenon. The reason for caution about implementing strict laws related to the revolving door phenomenon is simply that government agencies may not be able to recruit highly talented people to deal with what is becoming more technical and involved issues related to how private sector companies are regulated. Once again, there is a legal concern about potential conflicts of interest on the part of government employees who have worked in the private sector or who will take private sector jobs after their employment with the government in which they will be working on similar issues and lobbying the government agencies in which they worked (Baxter, 2011; Painter, 2009). If citizens come to view government employees and regulators as being more concerned about their former employers or the ability to obtain jobs once they leave their government jobs, then they may not have confidence that government agencies are working in their best interests.

However, implementing strict laws that prevent former government employees from taking jobs in the private sector in which they lobby their former agencies or work directly with their former agencies could cause a lack of talent within the government (DesNoyer, 2004; Webber, 1996). In this way, strict legal limits on the revolving door phenomenon could also harm the public's perception of the government even while addressing the concern of conflicts of interest. For the major stakeholders of the government, which would be the public, to receive the best services possible from government employees, at least some of the revolving door phenomenon might be necessary (Webber, 1996).

To summarize, legal research on the revolving door phenomenon within the executive branch has predominantly approached the topic from a theoretical perspective, focusing on themes such as ethics and public trust in government. This body of research has delved into theoretical concerns regarding the ethical conduct of government employees and the potential for conflicts of interest, all while considering the broader issue of public trust. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the federal government requires highly skilled individuals to fulfill its roles effectively. To attract the best talent and expertise, government employees must be aware that they can pursue similar positions in the private sector after leaving public

service. Therefore, irrespective of the extent of the revolving door phenomenon or its ethical implications, it may serve as a positive mechanism for ensuring the government's access to top-tier talent—an aspect that may be challenging to curtail realistically.

### *Academic Research*

The academic literature that has been written over the past 20 years, in contrast to the legal literature, has largely approached the subject of the revolving door in government based on the themes of conflicts of interest and the reasons why the revolving door actually exists at all. Although the methodology for this literature review involved gathering literature from 1992 to the present, it appears necessary to make an exception for an important investigation conducted by William T. Gormley, Jr. in 1979. The purpose of the investigation was to examine the revolving door phenomenon within the Federal Communications Commission with regard to decisions made by members of the organizations. Gormley found that former employment with companies in regulated industries was related to making favorable decisions for those industries once serving within the FCC. However, the research also showed that there was a greater concern about the entire industry on the part of FCC members as opposed to concerns about former employers. In general, the research indicated that the revolving door phenomenon did indeed influence the decisions of the members of the Federal Communications Commission. However, this impact was somewhat mitigated by larger concerns and considerations related to the future of the broadcasting and communications industry.

More recent literature includes Etzion and Davis (2008), who performed a network analysis in order to determine the connections between people who had been members of the Administrations of President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush and whether they became corporate directors within a period of about three years after leaving the Executive Branch. The authors found that a revolving door between the Executive Branch and high-level corporate positions in relation to the Clinton and Bush Administrations did exist. Interestingly, the authors found a greater revolving door phenomenon within the Bush Administration than the Clinton Administration. Based on these findings, the authors have argued that working in the Executive Branch provides a way for people to obtain higher-level private sector jobs because of the ability to use

their government connections to obtain contracts and other favors. The strength of this research lies in its approach of examining actual relationships between individuals who had previously served in Presidential administrations and later became corporate directors in the private sector within a few years of leaving their positions in the Executive Branch. This method allowed for a direct investigation of the revolving door phenomenon and its implications for the movement of individuals between the government and the private sector.

However, research has also shown that the connection between actions within government and future jobs with companies who were previously part of the work performed in government is more dynamic than might be expected (Cohen, 1986). What this means is that research showed that among regulators working for the Federal Communication Commission, it appeared that the revolving door phenomenon only became an issue in the final year of the government appointment. Once a person knew they were leaving their government position, it appeared that decisions were made in favor of private companies with the hope of working for one of those companies. Although Cohen (1986) seemed to argue that the revolving door phenomenon does not greatly influence policy-making because it only seems to impact the concerns of people in the final year of their positions, this still raises an important question of trust. Even if the revolving door only impacts the decisions of government employees in the final year of their government positions, this still means that there is, at some point, more of a concern about private companies than about the regulatory functions performed on behalf of the people.

Research conducted by Helland & Sykuta (2001) using data from companies between 1978 and 1998 found that regulated companies were more likely to have members of their Boards of Directors who had previously served in government positions. This means that companies that face government regulation are more likely to take advantage of the knowledge and connections that former government employees have by placing them on their Boards of Directors as compared to companies that do not face regulation on the part of the federal government. From the standpoint of regulated companies, this research is important because it indicates that these companies are attempting to protect themselves and gain an advantage by using former government employees to successfully work

with and lobby government agencies to take actions that are beneficial to them.

Because of the finding that regulated companies were more likely to have former government officials on their Boards of Directors as compared to non-regulated companies, it does seem that the revolving door phenomenon is something that should be of concern. One of the concerns should be that people who take jobs within the federal government might do so because it increases their potential to obtain higher-level jobs in the private sector upon leaving their government positions (Etzion & Davis, 2008). In essence, a job in a federal agency is more about obtaining long-term advancement within an industry as opposed to serving the needs and concerns of the people.

Helland and Sykuta (2001) argued in their research that so-called political directors, meaning members of Boards of Directors who were former government employees and officials, were like management tools used to help companies achieve desired outcomes with regard to winning government contracts or achieving favorable outcomes related to government regulations. If this were indeed the case, then it would seem that even though the revolving door phenomenon may create conflicts of interest and a lack of confidence in federal agencies, it might not be completely beneficial for government employees. Although former government officials may obtain high-level jobs in the private sector upon leaving their federal jobs, they may not have much power within the private sector. Instead, they may be viewed more as figureheads or networking tools than actual decision-makers.

However, as has been demonstrated within the legal community regarding the potential outcome of placing strict limits on the types of jobs and positions that government employees may hold once leaving the public sector, research has shown that in states in which laws have been implemented to stop the revolving door phenomenon, public employees are less ambitious and less skilled in their jobs (Law & Long, 2011). Although Law and Long (2011) conducted the research with members of Public Utilities Commissions in various states, it does allow for the ability to infer that imposing strict rules might seem necessary because of the legal and academic research showing that the revolving door phenomenon is very much active in many federal agencies, it may also not be in the best interest of the public.

The revolving door phenomenon may indeed create a perception that the federal government is not acting in the best interest of the public. However, it may also allow highly skilled employees to be hired into federal positions. A trade-off of sorts may occur between perceptions of the public, particularly in the wake of the 2007-2008 financial crisis, that federal employees are focused on the needs and desires of private companies and the need to have a pool of talented and ambitious people to take federal jobs (Meghani & Kuzma, 2011; Law & Long, 2011). Unfortunately, for the primary stakeholders of government, which are the citizens, the revolving door phenomenon and how it helps to draw ambitious people to government positions also means that greater government regulation will only increase the potential for conflicts of interest (Sumner, 1996).

In the federal regulatory system, the revolving door phenomenon means that greater government regulation will give companies a continued desire to hire former government employees into their organizations. It also means that government employees will know that a benefit exists to use their connections to allow them to obtain high-level private sector jobs in which they are essentially lobbying the agencies in which they previously worked (Sumner, 1996). The only way for the federal government to end the revolving door phenomenon without harming the ability to obtain highly talented people for federal regulatory jobs might be to actually end federal regulation. Without taking these actions, which would seem unlikely, the revolving door phenomenon might be something that cannot be completely stopped without being unable to attract talented people to regulatory agencies. This may explain why the Obama Administration has believed it necessary to grant dozens of waivers to its own Executive Order to prevent people from taking lobbying positions upon leaving the Executive Branch (Heidt, 2011).

In fact, with the desire to obtain private-sector jobs upon leaving the federal government, the revolving door phenomenon may actually increase enforcement actions on the part of regulatory employees. DeHaan et al. (2015) actually found that the desire to seek jobs after leaving the government increased the enforcement actions of lawyers working for the Security and Exchange Commission. The researchers examined data involving 334 SEC lawyers who worked on a total of 284 enforcement actions between 1990 and 2007. The researchers found that for the lawyers who left the

SEC and worked for private law firms in which they defended clients against the Securities and Exchange Commission, enforcement actions were greater than for lawyers who did not take jobs with law firms in which they represented defendants facing charges from the SEC. The researchers hypothesized that the reason for the increased enforcement efforts was that lawyers who planned to leave the SEC to work for law firms in which they would defend clients against the agency were to demonstrate their legal abilities in criminal proceedings, as well as increased abilities with regards to SEC rules and procedures.

Che (1995) also argued that the revolving door phenomenon could benefit the federal government because of the desire of employees to demonstrate their abilities in order to receive private-sector jobs. Specifically, the researcher argued that within regulatory agencies of the federal government, employees who seek to take jobs in the companies over which they have regulatory power upon leaving the government want to show a high level of ability to conduct monitoring activities and find legal or regulatory violations. By being more vigorous in enforcement activities, government employees may attempt to demonstrate their skills to private sector companies.

Once again, the theoretical concerns about conflicts of interest and public perceptions of ethics may not be related to the realities of the revolving door phenomenon within the federal government. Academic research has indeed demonstrated that citizens generally have a negative perception of the revolving door phenomenon (Frederickson & Frederickson, 1995). However, the academic research that has been reviewed has shown that the revolving door phenomenon within the federal government can be beneficial because it encourages government employees to work in a way that demonstrates their abilities so that they can better obtain private sector jobs once they leave the public sector.

Overall, the academic research that has been reviewed has indicated that the revolving door phenomenon is not widespread across all government agencies. Instead, the revolving door phenomenon appears to be prevalent in regulatory agencies in which employees have oversight powers over private sector companies. However, academic research seems to indicate that the revolving door phenomenon may actually be positive for the

federal government. The reason for this is that the employees of regulatory agencies want to build their reputations with regard to their abilities for the sake of gaining the attention of private companies. In this context, it is worth noting that while the revolving door phenomenon is indeed prevalent, it seems to yield positive impacts on the government, which is in contrast to the immediate negative assumptions held by many in the public.

It is crucial to clarify that characterizing the revolving door as positive for the federal government does not imply that it leads to better outcomes for the government or its stakeholders. It is important to note that none of the reviewed articles suggest that the revolving door phenomenon results in favorable outcomes concerning the work carried out by federal agencies. Instead, the notion of the revolving door being potentially positive signifies its role in attracting highly talented individuals to government positions within the federal government and presidential administrations. The ability for political appointees to transition between government and the private sector, and perhaps leverage their private-sector expertise to return to government service, enhances the government's capacity to recruit top-tier professionals for political appointments.

### ***Government Research***

The reports issued by government agencies regarding the revolving door phenomenon have typically been primarily focused on the theme of potential conflicts of interest that can arise. Reports from the U.S. Government agencies such as the Congressional Research Service and the General Accountability Office (GAO) provide a great deal of information about the actual numbers of former government employees from various agencies that now work as contractors in which they act as representatives of private companies to the agencies in which they previously worked. The GAO (2008) stated that in 2006, 52 contractors to the Department of Defense employed a total of 2,435 former officials of the Department of Defense, including generals, admirals, senior executives, contracting officers, and program managers. The GAO also stated that it estimated that 422 former Department of Defense officials were working on contracts directly related to projects they oversaw or worked on while working for the Department of Defense.

From the standpoint of the Department of Defense, the data from the GAO demonstrates that the revolving door phenomenon is very active within the Department of Defense. This information is important because it provides evidence that the revolving door phenomenon may indeed be greater in agencies where former government employees have knowledge and connections that are immediately valuable to private sector companies. Although this may not seem greatly important with regards to the Department of Defense, it must be remembered that billions of dollars in contracts are issued to private sector companies every year through the Department of Defense. Although a rule exists that requires that Department of Defense employees who leave the agency and who will be involved in contracts of over \$10 million for private companies receive an ethics opinion about this involvement, the GAO has found that these rules are often ignored or misunderstood (Maskell, 2010). There are rules to at least place some controls on the revolving door phenomenon, but they have largely been determined to be ineffective, at least within the Department of Defense.

The GAO (2011) has also noted that between October 2005 and October 2010, 37% of over 2,000 employees who left the Securities and Exchange Commission moved to jobs that were directly related to their positions within the agency. The GAO also noted that while there are rules that require documentation if former SEC employees will act on behalf of private companies within the organization within two years of employment, these rules are not often appropriately administered. What is indicated by this information, which is similar to the information about the Department of Defense, is that the revolving door is active within the SEC, and that rules designed to place controls on the revolving door phenomenon are not always correctly implemented.

The GAO (2011) also noted that the SEC has different rules across its various divisions and units about how to control the revolving door phenomenon. Some divisions conduct periodic reviews of employees to reduce the potential for conflicts of interest to arise. Other divisions, however, collect very little information related to the revolving door phenomenon of employees. Because of the role that the SEC plays in protecting investors in the United States, and really the stability of the investment markets, the apparent

lack of concern on the part of the SEC about conflicts of interest does seem problematic.

What is somewhat troubling is that the few government reports that have been examined are the only reports that could be found that directly addressed the issue of the revolving door on the part of employees of the Executive Branch of the United States Government. This is troubling because of the amount of attention given to the issue of the revolving door on the part of Presidents and Congressional leaders over the past two decades. However, based on the available information, it seems that the revolving door phenomenon is active within certain agencies of the Executive branch. Within the Department of Defense and the SEC, the revolving door phenomenon seems to be particularly active.

It is possible to speculate that the reason that the revolving door has been found to be so active within the Department of Defense and the SEC is because of the work that these agencies perform. Billions of dollars in government contracts originate from the Department of Defense, so private sector companies in the defense industry need the expertise and knowledge of former Department of Defense employees to help obtain some of these contracts. In the case of the SEC, it is certainly easy to understand how private sector companies in the financial industry would want to hire former SEC investors and regulators to help them navigate the many regulations that are in force and to help lobby the SEC and Congress to make regulatory changes in their favor.

Overall, the government literature reviewed not only supports the existence of the revolving door phenomenon within the executive branch but also indicates that its prevalence varies across different agencies. Agencies with regulatory authority over private sector firms or those responsible for awarding substantial contracts to private sector entities tend to exhibit a higher incidence of former employees transitioning to roles within the companies they previously supervised.

### ***Political Economy Research***

The revolving-door phenomenon, wherein individuals transition between roles in government and the private sector, has long been a subject of interest in the comparative political economy literature. Scholars have explored its implications for policymaking, regulatory capture, and public resource allocation.

Asai et al. (2021) focused on Japan and the impact of revolving-door bureaucrats on regulatory capture in public procurement. By examining data on government officials who transition to the private sector, the study sheds light on how this phenomenon may affect the integrity of public procurement processes. It highlights the potential for former bureaucrats to influence government decisions in favor of private firms, potentially leading to market distortions and inefficiencies.

Hong and Kim (2017) explored regulatory capture in the context of agency performance evaluation. The study discusses the interplay between industry expertise and revolving-door lobbying, particularly in South Korea. By examining cases where individuals with industry ties transition into regulatory agencies, the authors assessed whether this revolving-door phenomenon skews performance evaluations in favor of the private sector. The findings contribute to the understanding of how regulatory capture may manifest in the assessment of government agencies.

Hou et al. (2017) examined the relationship between regulatory capture and corporate innovation in China. They explored whether firms benefit from connections with former government officials, shedding light on the broader economic implications of the revolving door.

Studies above investigate the consequences of regulatory capture, particularly in the context of the revolving-door phenomenon, where individuals transition between government roles and the private sector. They examine how former government officials, often with industry ties, may impact policymaking, regulatory decisions, and the overall integrity of public procurement processes. These studies shed light on the potential distortions in markets and the implications for governance.

Li (2023) delved into the context of China. The paper investigated how the revolving door between the government and the private sector affects the allocation of public resources, specifically subsidies. Li suggested that former government officials may exploit their connections to secure subsidies for private firms. This practice, if widespread, can lead to the misallocation of public resources and raise concerns about the ethical dimensions of post-government careers.

You and Park (2017) focused on the relationship between bureaucrats, revolving doors, and corruption. The study examined how the revolving door phenomenon may contribute to corrupt practices within

government agencies. By examining instances where individuals with government experience move into roles where they can exploit their connections, these studies aim to uncover potential avenues for unethical behavior and corruption.

Delmestri and Greenwood (2016) took a comparative perspective and discussed how revolving doors influence regulatory processes and the construction of authority in different countries. They highlighted variations in the revolving-door phenomenon's impact. By comparing variations in the impact of the revolving-door phenomenon, these studies contribute to a deeper understanding of its implications on governance and regulatory practices.

Each theme offers unique insights into the multifaceted nature of the revolving door phenomenon, highlighting its potential consequences on governance, economic outcomes, and ethical considerations. Collectively, these themes contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and complexities associated with the revolving door phenomenon in various contexts.

### ***Trends and Key Findings***

Table 1 integrates key findings and research trends from the literature review across legal, academic, governmental, and political economy research. In summary, the integrated findings and research trends emphasize the need to address the revolving door phenomenon holistically, considering ethical concerns, economic implications, public trust, and the effectiveness of regulations. Achieving the right balance remains a central challenge in managing the complex interplay between government service and private sector opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

Table 2 presents the general key themes from each of the four areas of research that have been examined, as well as the themes that were discussed within each area of research. What is demonstrated within the available literature is that there is indeed an issue of trust that is raised with regard to the revolving door phenomenon. If members of the executive branch are planning to leave their positions and seek out employment with the same companies that they had previously regulated, then the question arises of whether these people are



**Table 1***Key Findings and Research Trends From Four Research Areas*

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1. Ethical Concerns and Public Perceptions:
    - Legal research has predominantly focused on ethical concerns and public perceptions regarding the revolving door.
    - Concerns revolve around potential ethics violations and the erosion of public trust in government due to perceived conflicts of interest.
    - Public perceptions often lean towards viewing the revolving door as a negative phenomenon.
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2. Balancing Talent Attraction and Public Trust:
    - A recurring theme is the delicate balance between attracting highly skilled individuals to government roles and maintaining public trust.
    - Legal and academic research recognize the need to balance talent recruitment with ethical considerations.
    - Striking this balance is challenging, as strict rules to prevent the revolving door can deter talented individuals from government service.
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3. Impact on Government Effectiveness:
    - Academic research investigates how the revolving door impacts government effectiveness and performance.
    - It highlights the positive aspect of attracting talent to government roles by allowing employees to showcase their skills for future private sector opportunities.
    - Governmental research provides empirical evidence of the revolving-door phenomenon across various agencies, with a focus on conflicts of interest.
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4. Economic Implications and Regulatory Capture:
    - Political economy research explores the economic implications of the revolving door, particularly in the context of regulatory capture.
    - It links the phenomenon to potential market distortions, corporate innovation, and resource allocation.
    - Variations in the revolving-door phenomenon are examined across different countries and industries.
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5. Effectiveness of Regulations:
    - Across all research types, there is a common concern regarding the effectiveness of regulations aimed at controlling the revolving door.
    - Legal research highlights the challenges in implementing strict rules and the potential for waivers to bypass them.
    - Governmental research reveals that rules may not always be correctly implemented within agencies.
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6. Complexity of the Revolving Door:
    - The literature review collectively underscores the multifaceted nature of the revolving-door phenomenon.
    - It encompasses ethical, legal, economic, and governance dimensions, making it a complex issue to address comprehensively.
    - Researchers and policymakers continue to grapple with the nuanced challenges and potential benefits associated with the revolving door.
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**Table 2***Key Themes*

	<b>Overall Interpretation</b>	<b>Agencies Affected</b>	<b>Positive or Negative</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Legal	Necessary in order to attract talented people, but it should be controlled to prevent ethics problems and negative public perception of the government	Regulatory Agencies	Positive in terms of recruiting qualified appointees; negative in terms of public perception	Ethics Public perception of the government
Academic	Creates conflicts of interest, but may also be necessary in order to attract talented people	Regulatory agencies and Department of Defense	Positive to attract trained people; negative in creating conflicts of interest	Conflict of interest Reasons for the revolving door phenomenon
Government	Raises many concerns about conflicts of interest.	Regulatory agencies and Department of Defense	Negative because of conflicts of interest	Conflict of interest
Political Economy	Potential consequences on governance, economic outcomes, and ethical considerations	Regulatory Agencies	Positive to expertise and networking; negative in creating conflicts of interest, regulatory capture	Regulatory capture

working on behalf of their future employers or the people. Even if post-government employment is only a concern within the final year of working within the executive branch, this still creates a problem of trust for the people because it suggests that at some point, government employees are more concerned about the potential to gain post-government employment than carrying out their oversight functions within the government. This certainly seems troubling for people who work within the executive branch because part of the jobs they perform is to carry out the positions of the president, as well as to advise the president and members of the executive branch on policy issues.

The themes raised within the literature are different, depending on the focus of the studies. For example, academic and government literature focused mostly on the idea of the conflict of interest that can occur because of the revolving door phenomenon. However, each of the four areas of research also contained other themes unrelated to each other with regard to the revolving

door phenomenon. The legal research was focused on ethics and public perceptions of government. In comparison, the academic research was also focused on the potential for conflicts of interest and the reasons why the revolving door phenomenon occurs within the federal government.

The differences in areas of focus on the themes that were presented in each of the research areas are not surprising because each type of research was conducted with different concerns. The government studies were concerned about the functioning of government and whether resources were being misused or wasted because of the revolving door phenomenon. The legal and academic research, however, were focused on concerns about ethics, conflicts of interest, and the public perception of government with regard to the potential that political appointees may be more concerned for their own careers than for the needs and desires of citizens. The different issues and concerns that were the focus of the reviewed research provided a

way to thoroughly examine the concept of the revolving door. The revolving door from the political economy literature attracts talent and expertise to government roles but also raises concerns about conflicts of interest and regulatory capture.

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the revolving door phenomenon within the executive branch is indeed active, but it is not widespread across all agencies. Instead, the revolving door phenomenon seems to be greatest in those agencies and parts of the executive branch that have the most direct connection to private-sector companies. For example, the research suggests that the revolving door phenomenon is widespread within agencies such as the SEC and the Federal Communications Commission. This is likely because people who have worked for these agencies gain a great deal of knowledge about the regulatory process. Once they leave their positions, they can use this knowledge to benefit private-sector companies that must attempt to influence the policies and regulatory oversight of those agencies.

Unfortunately, these exploratory findings also suggest a larger problem with regard to the issue of trust within the executive branch. If the staff members and political appointees in the agencies of the executive branch that have the most direct connection to the private sector are those most involved in the revolving door phenomenon, concerns are raised about whether these people are working in the best interest of the private sector or of people. This is particularly troublesome because of the conclusion that the revolving door phenomenon is not simply a function of working in the executive branch. Instead, it appears to be a function of working in those agencies that have the most direct connections and oversight functions with the private sector.

Finally, the research also indicates that the revolving door phenomenon may be something that is actually beneficial. The research suggests that because of the ability of government employees to obtain jobs in the private sector, people with higher levels of talent and ambition want to take such positions. If the revolving door phenomenon were to be completely ended through strict laws, the result would likely be that highly talented people would avoid government positions. The reason for this would be that it would not be possible to use the skills and connections made through government service in the private sector

This study has certain limitations in terms of methodology and its generalizability. Due to the aim of making comparisons, I have discussed a limited volume of papers, and the findings may not be easily generalizable. Therefore, future studies should aim to address these limitations and expand our understanding of the mechanisms and trends of the revolving door phenomenon in more diverse contexts. Additionally, it would be valuable for future research to categorize the literature into two distinct groups: one focusing on officials with business experience and the other on officials-turned-executives or directors. These two channels exhibit distinct characteristics and warrant further discussion regarding their differences.

### **Declaration of Ownership**

This report is my original work.

### **Conflict of Interest**

None.

### **Ethical Clearance**

This study was approved by my institution.

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