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Nonprofit Crossover Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Nonprofit Executives from For-Profit Backgrounds

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Nonprofit Crossover Leadership:
A Phenomenological Study of Nonprofit Executives from For-Profit Backgrounds

by

Daniel A. Stirratt

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF

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Nonprofit Crossover Leadership:
A Phenomenological Study of Nonprofit Executives from For-Profit Backgrounds

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality.

We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions

required by the final examining committee have been made.
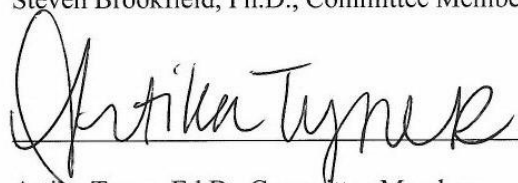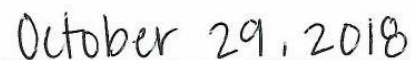
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the motivations and experiences of for-profit leaders who crossed sectors to become nonprofit executives. Eight participants described their career pathways and initial experiences in a for-profit setting. Pathway stories to nonprofit leadership began with educational background, followed successive for-profit roles, and concluded with one or more nonprofit executive leadership experiences. The study revealed nonprofit crossover leaders followed a motivation for missional alignment, whether consciously known early in their career progression or discovered later, and shared a system of beliefs, values, and ethics ultimately pointing toward nonprofit executive positions. Nonprofit crossover leaders demonstrated varying postures of preparedness for their initial experiences in the nonprofit sector and implemented organizational changes early in their tenures following a similar set of strategic priorities. Authentic leadership theory explained the missional motivation and values-based system of decision-making guiding their career pathways into nonprofit roles. However, nonprofit crossover leaders favored the more mechanistic elements of the structural frame over the human resource, political, and symbolic frames (Bolman & Deal, 2017) in the organizational changes they implemented. The study contributes to a largely under-researched trend in the nonprofit sector of hiring executives with for-profit backgrounds (Su & Bozeman, 2009) and expands understanding of nonprofit crossover leadership with implications for leaders and nonprofit organizations, as well as for institutions offering nonprofit leadership programs.

Keywords: nonprofit leadership, nonprofit executives, crossover leadership, sector shifting, authentic leadership, four-frames model of organizational leadership, nonprofit boards, nonprofit leadership programs

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The historic model of nonprofit leadership evokes images of the passionate social worker confronting social ills with the thinnest of resources. When Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Star founded Hull House on the west side of Chicago in 1889, they did so with a vision "to create a place that would nurture the universal and democratic fellowship among people of all classes" (Knight, 2010, p. 68). Their passionate dream, coupled with the necessary resources, transformed not only the lives of their neighbors in the Nineteenth Ward, but also the lives of countless people around the world. As a model of nonprofit leadership, Jane Addams represents the kind of leader many in the field of social work seek to emulate in their effort to advance social change through nonprofit organizations.

However, a shift is taking place in the nonprofit sector lessening the likelihood someone like this archetype of the social work movement will be found as the head of a nonprofit organization (Santora & Sarros, 2001). Increasingly, faced with the challenges of a changing economy and shifting social policies, nonprofit boards are looking for executives who can lead with a vision for social change and business acumen (Hoefer, Watson, & Preble, 2013). More and more nonprofits hire executives directly from the for-profit sector to meet the demands of a new era in nonprofit leadership (Suarez, 2010). Referred to as nonprofit crossover leaders, these executives represent an emerging face of nonprofit leadership, comprising almost 20% of senior positions across the nonprofit sector (Suarez, 2010). Despite their growing prevalence in the sector, scholarly research on nonprofit crossover leaders is largely absent, leaving an understanding of them to fragmented anecdotes and popular features of celebrity-level examples. The purpose of my study is to establish a foundational scholarly understanding of nonprofit crossover leadership.

Problem Statement, Significance, and Purpose

The traditional path to nonprofit leadership once followed a predictable succession from fieldwork, to management, to executive leadership (Santora & Sarros, 2001; Suarez, 2010). Large scope changes in economic policies and educational opportunities over the past several decades have altered the landscape for nonprofit leadership, opening up new paths to top positions. The diversification of career paths to nonprofit leadership is, in part, the result of a fluctuation in economic and social policies. These shifts created a need for greater business skills and management experience for nonprofit leaders.

Nonprofit organizations, associations, and mutual benefit societies have roots deep in the American landscape, extending back to before the founding of the United States government (Salamon, 1999) in the tradition of European organizational and welfare models (Borzaga & Santuari, 2003). Charitable organizations gained greater definition and form in the early 20th century through the establishment of income tax codes and exemptions (O'Neill, 2002). Precise definition of the nonprofit sector remains elusive and contested in contemporary literature (BoardSource, 2012; Frumkin, 2012; Morris, 2000). Despite the uncertainty of its definition, the impact of the nonprofit sector on the U.S. economy and society as a whole is unquestionable (Smith, 2012). As of 2008, Ebrahim (2012) reported the nonprofit sector included a $2 trillion industry with over 1.5 million nonprofit organizations registered in the United States, a figure that has increased by 40-50% in the last 10 years. Seaworth (2012) estimated the nonprofit sector employs approximately 10.5 million people—about 10% of the working population. In 2005, nonprofits logged 12.9 billion volunteer hours, which is comparable to the work of 7.6 million full time employees (Machowsky, 2011).

While historically bridging the gap between public and private social services from independent charitable support, nonprofit organizations benefitted from a significant increase in government funding for health care and research as result of policy changes in the 1960s (Salamon, 1999, 2012; Young, 2003). During the Great Society era of the Kennedy-Johnson administrations, the government invested more heavily in human service activities and social programs. By the 1970s, government funding of nonprofit organizations exceeded private funding sources (Salamon, 1999). Federal funding lapsed as the U.S. economy flattened later that decade and decreased further as result of budgetary and policy changes in the 1980s under the Reagan administration (Salamon, 1999; Young, 2003). The nonprofit sector adapted to these changes by becoming more like the for-profit sector: "The resulting pressures seem to have pushed it toward a more commercial mode," which created "a challenge both to the way nonprofit organizations have actually operated and to popular conceptions about how they are supposed to behave" (Salamon, 1999, p. 8).

Operational and behavior changes often meant incorporating business tools and practices developed in the private sector:

> Recently developed tools for performance management in the private sector show a growing awareness that firms have to acknowledge and manage the needs of all major stakeholders if they want to be financially successful. At the same time, nonprofit organizations emphasize notions of performance measurement and accountability more and more. Scholars argue that constituencies can assess whether the organization fulfills its mission properly only if nonprofit organizations provide information on their performance. If such an assessment is not possible, public trust in nonprofit organizations is bound to be lost. (Speckbacher, 2003, p. 268)

This trend is also evidenced in the literature on nonprofit human resource management (Ridder & McCandless, 2008), which references adaptive practices like pay for performance (Brandl & Güttel, 2007: Meyer, Buber, & Aghamanoukjan, 2013); strategic planning (Theuvsen, 2004); performance measurement, including logic models, standardization, and monetization (Lynch-

Cerullo & Cooney, 2011; Meezan & McBeath, 2011); awards and certifications to promote

quality management (Patton & Foot, 2000), as well as the professionalization of the nonprofit

workforce (Hwang & Powell, 2009).

Recognizing the need for supporting the integration of for-profit operational and

performance practices, nonprofit boards — often comprised of for-profit leaders (Austin, 2008)

— are shifting expectations of the nonprofit leaders they hire; more non-profit board members

are looking for leaders with management skills and masters of business administration degrees

(Hoefer, Watson, & Preble, 2013). With increasing frequency, finding the leaders with these

profiles means directly hiring from the for-profit sector (Ritchie & Eastwood, 2006). The way to

the top of nonprofit organizations is no longer a single path upward within the organization; it

now includes lateral and promotional transitions spanning the nonprofit, public, and for-profit

sectors (Suarez, 2010). The absence of substantive research on the shifting trend of sector

switching leaves nonprofit crossover leaders and their receiving organizations at risk. At stake is

not fully understanding what a crossover executive hire means for the leader or for the

organization.

Historical developments in socio-economic policies produced an environment in which

the leadership of nonprofit organizations has become increasingly complex. Nonprofit leaders

no longer simply rise through the ranks to take the helm; they come from other organizational

sectors and are often educated in areas of nonprofit leadership or business management (Suarez,

2010). Leaders who transition from the for-profit sector represent a growing subset of nonprofit

leaders. According to a study by Suarez (2010) of leaders from 200 nonprofit organizations in

San Francisco, 18% came from outside the nonprofit sector and 21% had prior management

experience in a private sector business (p. 704). Suarez (2010) compared the demographics of

his study's sample with a national study of nonprofit leaders and determined his findings are generalizable, suggesting this subset of nonprofit leaders could comprise as much as one-fifth of the nonprofit executive workforce.

However, exploration of the experiences and perspectives of leaders who have shifted to the nonprofit sector remains limited (Su & Bozeman, 2009). Additionally, while some researchers observed the professionalization and commercialization of the nonprofit sector as the key to its survival (Hwang & Powell, 2009; Machowsky, 2011; Ritchie & Eastwood, 2006), others questioned the direct importation of business practices into nonprofit organizations (Andreasen, Goodstein, & Wilson, 2005; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004) and raised an alarm that "a struggle is under way at the present time for the 'soul' of America's nonprofit sector" (Salamon, 2012, p. 1).

My research on the crossover experiences of nonprofit leaders who transition from the for-profit sector is important for three audiences. First, business leaders who are considering a crossover into the nonprofit sector will benefit by reading about others who have crossed as they reflect on their own possible sector transition. Similarly, leaders who have already crossed sectors will likely identify with the challenges and successes of others in their unique peer group and can better reflect on their own experience. Second, nonprofit boards and executives looking to the private sector to fill senior leadership positions will benefit from a deeper understanding of what hiring crossover leaders could mean for their organizations, how to prepare for interviewing them, and how to support their efforts. Third, implications of research on crossover leaders also are relevant for the design of early and mid-career nonprofit leadership programs, which have significantly grown in number in the past 30 years on both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Mirabella & Young, 2012).

Research Questions

The gap and tension in scholarly literature on sector switching from for-profit to nonprofit executive leadership warranted further investigation to gain more perspective on this trend in nonprofit leadership. My research primarily was guided by a desire to understand the nonprofit crossover leader experience. In my study, I explored three fundamental questions: Why do leaders choose to leave the for-profit sector to become nonprofit executives? How do these leaders describe their crossover experience? What perspective and priorities do nonprofit crossover leaders bring to their nonprofit organizations?

Definition of Terms

Crossover leader: A person who leaves a position in one sector for a role in another sector; also referred to as "sector switchers" and "sector brokers" in some literature.

Executive leadership: The highest tier of leadership in an organization, including the roles of executive director, chief executive officer, chief operating officer, etc.; sometimes referred to as "C-Suite" or "C-level" positions.

For-profit organization: An organization or company established for the primary purpose of generating profit for the owner or shareholders; interchangeably referred to as "private" or "corporate" organizations.

Nonprofit organization: Any of a variety of charitable organizations established to advance the greater good in society and not for the purpose of generating individual or shareholder profit, meeting 501(c) tax-exempt requirements as defined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); examples include, but are not limited to nonprofit associations, nonprofit foundations, social and recreational clubs, and religious groups.

Public organization: An organization operated as a branch of the government or a publicly funded agency serving the general population.

Sector: A general economic classification of organizations and professions, most frequently identified in three groupings: for-profit, nonprofit, and public.

Sector switching: The term most frequently used in the literature to describe the instance of changing from a job located in one sector for a job in another sector; synonymous with "sector crossing," "boundary crossing" and other related terms.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter One establishes the larger societal context leading to the trend in nonprofits to seek executives from the for-profit sector. I outline the primary research questions used in the study and define key terms relevant to the overall discussion. Chapter Two explores the disparate literature on sector crossing gathered from multiple searches across several databases. This collection of research formed a cohesive base of knowledge for analysis of my data and may be useful for further investigation by researchers. I also review lenses of analysis I considered and ultimately chose for my study. In Chapter Three, I describe the methodology selected for my study, explain how I identified participants for the study, and outline what steps I took to ensure participant anonymity and the security of the data. Chapters Four and Five are presentations of the data, divided into two parts: the crossover leader and the crossover experience. Chapter Four describes the motivations and underlying beliefs, values, and ethics of the participants. Chapter Five portrays the initial experiences of the participants in their nonprofit organizations and identifies the strategic priorities they implemented after the start of their tenure. Chapter Six provides a detailed summary of the two analytic lenses I applied to interpret the data: authentic leadership theory and the four-frames model of organizational

leadership. Chapter Seven reviews the findings and outlines implications for other nonprofit crossover leaders and recommendations for nonprofit boards. I conclude the chapter with a recommendation for nonprofit leadership and management programs in academic institutions based on the findings of my research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sector switching is not a new phenomenon, but it often happens unnoticed or, in the case of celebrity-level leaders, only temporarily captures public attention. Bozeman and Ponomariov (2009) noted the public response to the autobiographically reported sector crossovers of Michael Blumenthal, Fred Malek, and Donald Rumsfeld and observed:

> There is no lack of interest in sector switchers. When high-level executives who have worked as managers in the both [*sic*] public and private sectors decide to write about their experiences and make pronouncements (often ones unsystematic and from the hip), they receive much attention. (p. 78)

Similar popular fascination and appeal resulted from more recent examples of sector switching. Bill Gates' gradual transition from the for-profit sector to the nonprofit sector periodically made headlines. However, such coverage swings with the press cycle and the limited attention span of the public.

Very little published research exists on the topic of leaders who have crossed sectors in any direction and even less on for-profit to nonprofit crossovers. Multiple search threads in several databases produced only a handful of professional and scholarly research on crossover leaders. Examples of search terms used included: *nonprofit and business practices*; *executives, nonprofit sector, and for-profit sector*; *career change, for-profit sector, and nonprofit sector*; *crossover leaders*; *sector switching*; and *for-profit to nonprofit leadership*. I conducted searches in Academic Search Premiere, Business Source Premiere, and Emerald databases, as well as in a Google-like search engine called "Summon" which was available through the University of St. Thomas library website. These attempts yielded less than a dozen articles and books, even when removing filters for peer reviewed and scholarly literature. I obtained additional related literature by reviewing the reference lists from articles identified in earlier search attempts and retracing isolated lines of research. I encountered some supplementary literature through

serendipitous discovery. The challenging literature search process confirmed what the few authors on the subject observed: sector crossing is an under-researched topic and the available research is not coded with keywords to produce a substantial listing through traditional online search methods.

There was a need for a more cohesive body of literature, so I first organized the existing related research chronologically in categories of professional, doctoral, and scholarly literature on cross-sector leadership. I then conducted a methodological analysis of the collected literature and summarized it in the next section.

Table 1.

Chronology of Literature on Sector-Crossing by Type

Professional Literature	Doctoral Dissertations	Published Scholarly Literature
• Tuft (1986)* • Gray (1998)* • Taliento & Silverman (2005)* • Albrow (2005)*	• Camp (2005)* • Goebelbecker (2008)* • Potempa Niedosik (2014)	• Richie & Eastwood (2006)* • Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman, & Anker (2008) • Lewis (2008) • Bozeman & Ponomariov (2009) • Su & Bozeman (2009) • Boardman, Bozeman, & Ponomariov (2010) • Suarez (2010) • Austin, Dal Santo, & Lewis (2012)

Note: * indicates literature specifically on for-profit to nonprofit sector switching

Chronology of the Literature

Initially, references to the phenomenon of sector switching only appeared in professional, non-scholarly literature. Related scholarly research appeared first in 2006, but a comparison of

reference citations in later research indicated the researchers were often unaware of each other's

work. Chronologically, doctoral dissertations on sector switching roughly bridged the gap

between references in professional literature and published scholarly literature on the topic, but

are not cited in the published scholarly literature. I created separate chronologies of professional,

doctoral, and published scholarly literature (depicted in Table 1) in this analysis to reflect the

disparate attention given to the topic.

Professional Literature

An article in *Association Management* by a partner in an executive search firm (Tuft,

1986) made the unsubstantiated claim that "with greater frequency than in the past, these

[nonprofit] organizations are looking for their executives in the for-profit sector" (p. 79), noting

the increasing need for nonprofit leaders with degrees in business administration and prior

management experience. Nearly a decade later, an article appeared in *Financial Executive*

offering anecdotal observations and advice from financial leaders who already had transitioned

to the nonprofit sector regarding their perspective on cultural differences between the sectors and

the leadership challenges they encountered in their roles. According to the author of the article,

their experiences contrasted with a common perception among financial executives about

nonprofit leadership: it did not constitute "a way to take an on-the-job vacation or to wind down

their careers and prepare for retirement" (Gray, 1998, p. 49).

In 2005, two articles on cross-sector career transition appeared in professional

publications that utilized research methodology, but neither was peer-reviewed and both came

from proprietary sources. McKinsey and Company's Taliento and Silverman (2005) conducted

interviews with 12 nonprofit leaders who were hired from the nonprofit sector and, similar to

earlier articles, developed a list of five leadership challenges encountered by "crossover leaders"

(p. 5). *Third Sector* published survey data from a researcher associated with a nonprofit organization focused on facilitating career transition from 55 leaders who crossed from the private sector to the public sector. After citing a series of statistical results from the survey on the leaders' experiences, the article concluded: "What we need now is to reinforce the structures that carry the flows [of leaders across sectors]" (Albrow, 2005, p. 35). The professional literature adds credence to the occurrence and significance of cross-sector leadership, but is largely subject to the predispositions and purposes of its proprietary sources.

Doctoral Dissertations

Recognizing the lack of research on sector switching, Camp (2005) investigated the transition experiences of private sector retirees who returned to active employment in nonprofit organizations. Camp (2005) organized the findings according to stages of transition and reported the motivations, approaches, and reflections of the leaders on their own experiences. Analysis of the results indicated a lack of preparedness on the part of the participants for the differences between for-profit and nonprofit cultures as well as tension because of the differing role and organizational demands of nonprofit work, which required "an integration of experience, skills, and knowledge into a new hybrid role in the nonprofit sector" (p. 140) to successfully transition across sectors. Camp concluded with a call for continued research on sector crossing careers, noting the participants also "expressed hope" for further investigation of the phenomenon (p. 160).

Based on his own personal experience with a sector switching transition, Goebelbecker (2008) interviewed other senior leaders who had switched from the for-profit sector to the nonprofit sector. Participants in the study related similar stories of triggers for changing sectors as well as experiences, both positive and negative, during the initial stages of their transition that

reinforced their preconceptions of nonprofit organizational culture. Data analysis showed the research participants had undergone experiences characterized by personal transformations in self-confidence, career self-identity, and leadership behavior as result of switching sectors.

The most recently completed doctoral dissertation related to sector switching investigated the experiences of individuals who transitioned from the private to the public sector (Potempa Niedosik, 2014). Potempa Niedosik (2014) identified 12 motivational factors from the transition narratives of participants in her study. Motivations for crossing from the private to the public sector included job security, public service, promotion, values, advice, benefits, and job flexibility.

Published Scholarly Literature

The first reference to crossover leadership in published, scholarly literature occurred in 2006 with a study by Ritchie and Eastwood, who established a positive correlation between the functional background experience of nonprofit executives and the financial performance of the organization they lead, especially in the case of nonprofit executives with accounting, production, and marketing backgrounds. Although their study was not specifically on sector switching, they referenced two non-scholarly articles on the phenomenon (Peck, 1992; Tuft, 1986) in their introductory comments and selected a sample that included nonprofit leaders with prior work experience in the for-profit sector. With regard to the hiring of nonprofit executives, they concluded, "nonprofit organizations should consider selecting from specific functional areas" (Ritchie & Eastwood, 2006, p. 77). Their research seemed to confirm anecdotal evidence in the professional literature on the value of for-profit leaders in the nonprofit sector, but later studies do not reference their research.

Scholarly research specifically on sector crossing and crossover leaders appeared first in 2008 in a study by Lewis, who began with the acknowledgement that "very little research" had at that point been conducted on sector switching, "despite passing references to its importance" (p. 126). In this foundational study, Lewis (2008) identified two forms of boundary crossing: consecutive (total sector change) and extensive (sector-spanning careers) and discussed the conditions for "cross-over" as well as the experiences of "sector brokers" (p. 139). He determined:

> For those who can make the transition successfully, there may be potentially positive change for both individuals and organisations. Crossover may lead a person to bring new and different approaches from one context to another and thereby trigger new ideas and creativity, or they may look back on their old sector home differently, perhaps more critically. It is here that potentially valuable forms of creativity—arising from different perspectives and positions, and of using existing capacities and skills in new contexts—can come into play. Yet positive change for one type of organization may constitute co-option or neutralization for another. (pp. 139-140)

Lewis' (2008) intent was to investigate the phenomenon of sector crossing as a means to explore the nature of the boundaries between sectors in relation to policy development, but his study also opened up a new vein of research that he would continue to explore later.

In the same year and unrelated to Lewis' (2008) study, Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman, and Anker (2008) published an analysis of data from a survey of 688 alumni from four MBA and MPA schools to investigate perceived competence and prior work experience in relation to sector preferences and sector transitions. They confirmed a number of their hypotheses, including stability of sector preferences with the exception of employees with "strong protean career orientations" (p. 684), as conceptualized by Morrison and Hall (Hall, 2002). They also demonstrated that the nonprofit sector "appears to be the most successful at employing this type of individual" (Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman, & Anker, 2008, p. 684).

One vein in the literature included a series of explorations into the realm of sector switching, beginning with the benefits of switching from the private sector to the public sector on an individual's career development. Bozeman and Ponomariov (2009) found a switch from the private sector to the public sector positively correlated with a promotion and an increase in the number of direct reports, which could be a strong indicator of motivation. Su and Bozeman (2009) included crossover from the private sector to the nonprofit sector and found a high likelihood of sector switching among managers, with a greater likelihood to switch to the public sector (97%) than to the nonprofit sector (49%) among the sample used (p. 1110). Boardman, Bozeman, and Ponomariov (2010) investigated the impact of sector switching on job satisfaction and job involvement, though limited the study to those who switched from the private sector to the public sector. Results indicated public managers with prior work experience in the for-profit sector have lower job satisfaction than managers without private sector experience, but have higher job involvement "potentially because… their current public sector jobs were promotions" (Boardman, Bozeman, & Ponomariov, 2010, p. 56). This series of studies represents the most extensive and consistent research on crossover leaders to date.

Suarez (2010) analyzed the career paths of 200 nonprofit leaders to explore the role of managerial experience and substantive expertise. His results illustrated the diversity of career and educational backgrounds among leaders in the nonprofit sector. Founders and in-sector hires comprised the majority (82%) of nonprofit leaders in the sample, but a significant number of out-of-sector hires (18%) signal a shift in the nonprofit sector (p. 704):

> The changes in the nonprofit sector are still relatively new, and they might just be starting to influence the distribution of leaders throughout the sector. As current executives retire, staff members with management backgrounds in all fields might be increasingly likely to become leaders. (p. 707)

Suarez (2010) created a typology of nonprofit leaders according to career background in management and nonprofit experience (Table 2). The typology serves as a means for better understanding the distribution of leadership experience and expertise in the nonprofit sector and could be a useful tool for analysis in future research on nonprofit crossover leaders.

Table 2.

Typology of Nonprofit Leaders by Management and Nonprofit Experience

The Professional Administrator	The Social Entrepreneur
• Business acumen skill set • Open to multiple sectors • Might have nonprofit volunteer or board experience	• Approaches nonprofit from a cost & finance perspective • Prior training in management • Dedicated to nonprofit sector • Follows a "nonprofit ethic"
The Substantive Expert	The Nonprofit Lifer
• Academically or professional credentialed • Non-sector-specific experience • Substance over management experience • Discovers management rather than seeks it out	• Hands-on experience • Reaches top position over time or is a founder • Perceives the nonprofit sector as distinct and favors it • Rises through the ranks

Note. Based on Figure 1 in Suarez, 2010, p. 708

Continuing Lewis' (2008) line of investigation on forms of boundary crossing, Austin, Dal Santo, and Lewis (2012) identified three boundary crossing archetypes based on leaders who crossed between the public and nonprofit sectors. The first category, client advocates, is composed of individuals intrinsically motivated by the needs of clients in the human services industry and continued to advocate after switching sectors. Their "adaptive competence" determined whether they would stay by aligning their new context with their own values or would leave, either voluntarily or by termination (p. 114). The second category, organizational

change agents, placed more emphasis on their abilities to develop organizational structures and processes in either sector. They often crossed sectors "in order to pursue new challenges in applying their skills and experiences in a new setting" (p. 118). The final category, team leaders, expressed the highest degree of adaptability to new contexts and often crossed sectors for reasons "external to their professional or role identities, including the challenges of family relocation or the process of recruitment" (p. 122).

The scope of literature on sector switching is limited but has expanded over the past 10 years. Much of the existing research occurred along separate lines of investigation. A more coherent baseline of knowledge on the topic seems to be forming, but significant gaps remain in our knowledge of for-profit to nonprofit sector switching.

Methodological Framework of the Literature

In addition to a chronological analysis, a brief analysis of the research methodologies used by the researchers provides a second framework for organizing the available literature on sector switching. Researchers approached the topic of sector switching from three investigative angles: for-profit to public, public to nonprofit, and for-profit to nonprofit (Figure 1). Some studies were bi-directional or incorporated all three sectors, but this was not the general pattern. I found no studies on either nonprofit to for-profit or public to for-profit sector switching.
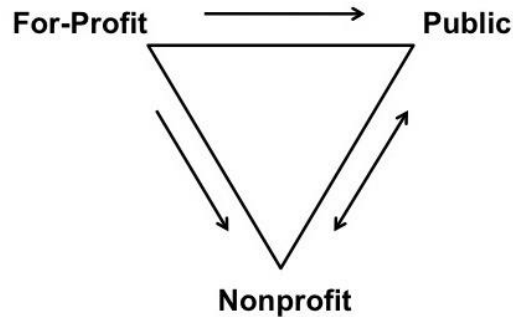
Figure 1. Three methodological categories found in the literature.

Points of the triangle represent the originating sector of the sector-switching sample studied.

Available literature includes crossover samples of for-profit to public, for-profit to nonprofit, and

reciprocally between nonprofit and public.

For-Profit to Public

The research series involving Bozeman (Boardman, Bozeman, & Ponomariov, 2010;

Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009; Su & Bozeman, 2009) defines the current literature on sector

switching from the for-profit sector to the public sector. The series was foundational to the only

other research following this trajectory of the sector switching methodological framework

(Potempa Niedosik, 2014). Su and Bozeman (2009) included methodology that also included

participants who switched from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector, but they oriented discussion

of the implications primarily toward "public management and policy" (p. 1111). Regarding

methods, the Bozeman series analyzed data from the National Administrative Studies Project

(NASP-III) and Potempa Niedosik (2014) conducted a qualitative, phenomenological study. As

a subsection in the body of literature on sector switching, the methodological framework of

current literature on for-profit to public crossover advanced the knowledge of: predictive factors

(Su & Bozeman, 2009), the transitional experience of private to public sector switchers (Potempa

Niedosik, 2014), career development benefits (Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009), and job

satisfaction and involvement after switching (Boardman, Bozeman, & Ponomariov, 2010). Though there are few studies, coverage of this dimension of the sector switching literature is fairly broad.

Public to Nonprofit

The subset of literature on crossover from the public sector to the nonprofit sector is currently limited to two studies by Lewis (Austin, Dal Santo, & Lewis, 2012; Lewis, 2008). As illustrated in the methodological framework displayed in Figure 1, this is the only subset of the research that is bi-directional. Both studies used an ethnographic approach, using a life history method and one-on-one interviews with individuals whose careers spanned both sectors. The researchers uncovered more about the dynamics of boundary crossing between sectors and the experiences of the individuals who made the crossover (Lewis, 2008) and discussed the potential for personal and organizational learning gained through these crossover experiences (Austin, Dal Santo, & Lewis, 2012: Lewis, 2008).

For-Profit to Nonprofit

Studies of crossover from the private to the nonprofit sector are the least represented in the scholarly literature on sector switching. The majority of available literature is practitioner based and proprietary (Albrow, 2005; Gray, 1998; Taliento & Silverman, 2005; Tuft, 1986). Two doctoral dissertations provide the most direct data on crossover experiences. Both studies came out of the same institution within three years of one another. Camp (2005) and Goebelbecker (2008) each took a qualitative approach to study the experiences of "bridgers" by interviewing people whose career paths led them across sector boundaries. Ritchie and Eastwood's (2006) study only indirectly addressed the topic of crossover leadership by correlating publicly available financial information with survey data of chief executives of

nonprofit university and college foundations. This subset of the sector switching literature provided: a preliminary base of knowledge on the career development patterns of people who cross sectors (Goebelbecker, 2008), the challenges encountered when crossing sectors (Camp, 2005), and the potential financial benefits for nonprofit organizations that hire executives with functional backgrounds in traditionally private sector practices (Ritchie & Eastwood, 2006).

Theoretical Frameworks in the Literature

As has been demonstrated, sector switching is not a new occurrence. However, large scale economic and policy influences have changed the organizational landscape, especially for nonprofit organizations. The new nonprofit context opened opportunities for people with the proper motivation to shift sectors and willing organizations to receive them. The number of crossover leaders in the nonprofit sector is difficult to determine with precision, but scholarship seems to confirm practitioner reporting that they have a significant presence. Nominal research from various angles exists on the subject of sector switching, but additional research is needed to develop a more complete understanding of the phenomenon and its implications for the nonprofit sector. Having examined the available literature on sector switching chronologically and methodologically, I next review the theoretical frameworks present in the current literature and then present additional analytic lenses that can explain and expand knowledge about nonprofit crossover leadership.

Literature on sector crossing originated in practitioner based publications. Consequently, very little of the early writing on it has an explicit theoretical foundation. However, over the past 10 years, researchers have taken greater interest in the subject. Analysis of the theoretical orientation of this more recent literature revealed two primary perspectives influencing the direction and focus of study: organizational theory and career theory. Each of these theoretical

perspectives will be reviewed next as they are illustrated in the current literature before consideration is given to alternative perspectives in the final section of the chapter.

Organizational Theory

With origins in the biological sciences, open-systems theory is one of the foundational theoretical frameworks for understanding how organizations work. Open-systems theory recognizes the environmental context of an organization as a source of influence and with which it interacts. This influence and interaction form the basis of a continual process:

> For survival, an organization takes in energy from its environment. Energy is broadly defined and may include money, raw materials, or the work of people. This energy is then transformed into a product or service and returned to the environment. The output may encompass the same segments of the environment or others that were used as energetic inputs. (Burke, 2008, p. 50)

Open-systems theory includes the consideration of "how people, processes, structures, and policies all exist in an interconnected web of relationships" (Anderson, 2010, p. 64). The theory has many applications in the life of an organization, including but not limited to strategic planning, change management, human resource management, industry standardization and legitimization, and financial development. Other organizational theories emphasize stability and stasis, but open-systems theory assumes organizations and their environments are dynamic and undergo regular periods of change, whether the change is incremental or strategically large-scale (Anderson, 2010).

Open-systems theory is particularly relevant to sector switching given the dynamic socioeconomic environment in which nonprofit organizations operate. It is not surprising to see aspects of open-systems theory and related theories used as orienting and analytic lenses in the literature. Researchers of sector switching referenced two theories closely related to open-systems theory: neo-institutionalism and resource dependence theory.

Neo-institutionalism. Suarez (2010) began the discussion of the theoretical background to his research by noting the abundance of research emphasizing the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Many researchers and practitioners contend the nonprofit sector historically not only fills a unique space in the social fabric, but also differentiates from the other sectors operationally, which Suarez (2010) summarized as a "nonprofit ethic" (p. 703). In contrast to the dominant perspective of the inherent distinctiveness of the nonprofit sector, Suarez (2010) considered neo-institutionalization as an alternative perspective.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) explained neo-institutionalization as a modern variation of the organizational theory on the bureaucratization of institutions as result of competition and demand for efficiencies. Neo-institutionalism maintains there is a trend toward similarity in organizations, but differs in the causality. Competition is a factor actively shaping organizations to become more similar, but neo-institutionalism claims the nature of the shared environment itself precipitates organizational similarity (i.e., "isomorphism"), which does not necessarily imply efficiency. Instead, organizations "respond to an environment that consists of other organizations responding to their environment, which consists of organizations responding to an environment of organizations' responses" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149). The result is a system in which organizations, because of their competitive awareness of one another, become more alike.

Suarez (2010) suggested isomorphism is occurring between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors "as nonprofits interact, compete, and collaborate with organizations in other sectors," which he referred to as "sector bending" (p. 698). Although not referring to neo-institutionalism,

Lewis (2008) observed the bending of sectors in the crossover experiences of leaders between the public and the nonprofit sectors in the Philippines, Bangladesh, and the United Kingdom:

> What do we learn about the boundary itself? In all three contexts, the boundary is regularly transcended by both consecutive and extensive forms of cross-over. At one level, it is a [*sic*] merely a conceptual boundary, an *idea* that helps map out the complex landscape of organisational life and the shifting institutional relationships of the neoliberal policy terrain. As such, it is highly artificial, since in the real world of organisations people carry ideas, relationships and practices with them as they travel across from one side to the other, as they change job, develop alliances or operate simultaneously in both sectors. (pp. 138-139)

As a theory closely related to open-systems, neo-institutionalism is present in the current subset of literature on sector switching both in theoretical foundation and in discussion of the findings.

Resource dependence theory. A second theory related to open-systems theory found in the literature is resource dependence theory, developed by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978). Like open-systems theory, resource dependence theory situates an organization within an environmental context, but emphasizes the limiting factor of the environment on the operation of the organization. It becomes the role of managers to mitigate and control the extent of the dependence on those resources in order to reduce uncertainty and maintain stability of operation, which inherently involves power and relationships: "Organizations attempt to reduce others' power over them, often attempting to increase their own power over others" (Hillman, Withers, & Collins, 2009, p. 404).

Ritchie and Eastwood (2006) cited resource dependence theory in their discussion of adaptations nonprofits have had to make with regard to funding and leadership: "Because nonprofit organizations depend on charitable munificence, grants, and funding, the top executives are central to their financial success—as they are often the key fundraisers" (p. 67). This theoretical orientation became the foundation of their study, which correlated the functional background of nonprofit leaders with the financial success of the organization. Other researchers

in the field of sector switching described the principles of resource dependence theory in their

discussion of the interrelated environmental context of nonprofit organizations (Austin, Del

Santo, & Lewis, 2012) and the role of managers (Suarez, 2010). Austin, Del Santo, and Lewis

(2012) noted the tension among researchers regarding the issue of interdependency:

> Some argue for greater separation and competition between the sectors to ensure
> nonprofit survival, including the infusion of for-profit sector capabilities to help
> nonprofits achieve self-sufficiency and independence (Greenlee & Tuckman, 2007).
> Others observe that the sectors need to develop more collaborative arrangements in order
> to combine the strengths of government with those of nonprofit delivery approaches
> Coston, 1998; Salamon, 1995). (p. 111)

As was found with neo-institutionalism, resource dependence theory plays a role in both the

theoretical orientation of the researchers as well as a point of discussion, and sometimes

contention, within the literature.

Social Cognitive Career Theory: Adaptive Competency

Whereas organizational theory focuses on the wider organization level aspects of the

research, a second theoretical perspective found in the literature on sector switching addressed

the individual level. Developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994, social cognitive career

theory relates to applied and occupational psychology. As an integrated theory, it "seeks to

explain three interrelated aspects of career development: (1) how basic academic and career

interests develop, (2) how educational and career choices are made, and (3) how academic and

career success is obtained" (Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 2008).

Social cognitive career theory is particularly relevant to the sector switching literature,

especially research focused on the experience of individuals who have crossed sectors on their

career paths. Several researchers of sector switching used theories related to social cognitive

career theory. One example from the literature found for this review is adaptive competence

theory.

Morrison and Hall (Hall, 2002) developed adaptive competence theory concerning the capacity of individuals to adapt to the rapidly changing environment in both home and workplace settings. As the nature of the workplace changes because of advancements in technology and the effects of economic shifts, more and more people find themselves thrust into new careers in different organizations, requiring certain competencies in order to adapt successfully. Adaptive competence is the combination of three components: identity exploration, response learning, and integrative potential. Identity exploration is a psychological process of development in which an individual grows in awareness of self and ability to learn about the self. Responsive learning is awareness of the environment around the self and the ability to modify behavior in order to operate effectively in that environment as it changes. Integrative potential is the ability to maintain a sense of self while making the necessary behavior changes to adapt to a new environment.

Austin, Dal Santo, and Lewis (2012) integrated adaptive competence theory into their methodological approach to explore the life histories of individuals whose careers span the public and nonprofit sectors. Using the theory as an analytic framework resulted in the development of a set of three archetypes of people who switched sectors. Although they were the only researchers found to cite adaptive competency theory, elements of the theory are observable in the earlier methodological work of Lewis (2008) and are reflected in the language framing the analytic approach of Boardman, Bozeman, and Ponomariov (2010):

> Our analysis of public managers' career trajectories is informed by explanations from applied psychology, especially the operations of attitude formation, which explain how individuals' past experiences and current beliefs and perceptions converge to form new attitudes, including satisfaction with and/or involvement in one's job. Additionally, this study is informed by explanations of workplace socialization from occupational psychology emphasizing the emotive effects of career transitions. (p. 51)

Adaptive competency theory is also directly related to the protean career model developed by Morrison and Hall (as cited in Hall, 2002) and used by Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman, and Anker (2008) to describe individuals whose orientations seemed to predispose them to desiring "the challenge and reward of developing new skills and knowledge" (p. 673). This disposition made them more likely to change careers, organizations, or sectors.

Theoretical Frameworks Considered for the Study

The two primary theoretical perspectives represented in the available body of literature on sector switching center on organizational theory and psychological theory. Other theoretical frameworks could open new perspectives on sector switching, especially a private to nonprofit sector transition. To broaden understanding of this phenomenon, I considered using sociological discourse as theorized by Lincoln (1989) and educational experience as theorized by Dewey (1997). I include the frameworks I considered as a conceptual background for the theoretical frameworks I ultimately chose to analyze data from my participant interviews. They also serve as a theoretical foundation for possible future research I present in Chapter Seven.

Sociological discourse: Taxonomy and anomaly. Lincoln (1989) observed the basic tools of societal change are force (i.e., physical challenge) and discourse (i.e., symbolic or verbal challenge) and that these tools often complement one another, upholding or transforming societal norms and power structures. Lincoln's sociological approach as an analytic framework for sector crossover experiences could provide insight into organizational challenges and tensions like the ones reported by participants in some of the qualitative studies on crossover experiences. In particular, the concepts of *taxonomy* and *anomaly* could prove useful as analytic lenses.

Taxonomies are systems of classification that create and maintain a collective, valuative understanding of societal norms and tend to perpetuate—and are perpetuated by—existing

hierarchical structures (Lincoln, 1989). Countertaxonomies exist within a society to challenge

dominant norms and structures, but generally operate as marginalized voices unless they are

persuasive and gain a following (Lincoln, 1989). Lincoln (1989) demonstrated how taxonomies

could be depicted on a chart to portray these dominant and marginalized ideologies operating in

a society. A taxonomic analysis of an organizational context in which an out-of-sector crossover

took place at the executive level could reveal more about what issues are at stake in the situation.

A related concept that could be insightful is *anomaly*. Different from countertaxonomies,

anomalies do not fit within the parameters of an existing taxonomic system and, according to

Lincoln (1989), occur in two forms: they can be explainable within the reigning system and,

therefore, can be labeled for their deviance and misfit; or they can defy explanation and,

therefore, challenge the reigning system as a valid and contrasting form. In either case,

anomalies pose a threat to the established order by nature of their contrast and by increasing

awareness of weaknesses in the existing taxonomic structure, which otherwise may go unnoticed

(Lincoln, 1989). When leveraged intentionally by social change agents, anomalies can overturn

hegemonic taxonomies. A study on crossover leaders from the private sector as taxonomic

anomalies in a nonprofit system could reveal interesting implications for both organizational and

sector-level stakeholders.

Theory of experience. A second innovative theoretical and methodological approach

would be to consider crossover experience from the educational perspective of Dewey.

Particularly relevant from Dewey's educational philosophy is his foundational groundwork on a

theory of experience (Dewey, 1997). Originally published in 1937, Dewey's *Experience and

Education* described two key principles to frame a theory of experience that have relevance for

sector crossover experiences. The first principle, continuity, distinguishes between experiences

that are truly educational and experiences that are too disjointed or accidental to be formatively educational. Central to this principle are the concepts of habit and Dewey's unique understanding of the term "growing."

Continuity. Dewey described a habit as an individual or social "human activity" derived from past experiences "which is projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation" and continuously functions "even when not obviously dominating activity" (Dewey in Fesmire, 2003, p. 10). Fesmire (2003) suggested these subtle activities include the use of "symbol systems, stories, beliefs, myths, metaphors, virtues, gestures, prejudices" (p. 10). For leaders who cross from the for-profit sector to the nonprofit sector, a question to explore with regard to continuity would be in what sense prior for-profit experience operates as a habit affecting the ensuing nonprofit experience.

Another concept essential to continuity is growth, which Dewey (1997) emphatically described as not simply improvement, but growth leading to continued growth: "When and *only* when development in a particular line conduces to continuing growth does it answer to the criterion of education as growing," (p. 36). Nonprofit leaders who come from the for-profit sector may experience a form of growth. However, with regard to educational value, Dewey's (1997) questions are still relevant:

> Does this form of growth create conditions for further growth, or does it set up conditions that shut off the person who has grown in this particular direction from the occasions, stimuli, and opportunities for continuing growth in new directions? What is the effect of growth in a special direction upon the attitudes and habits which alone open up avenues for development in other lines? (p. 36)

Answers to these questions might be of particular interest to the nonprofit boards hiring crossover leaders for executive positions. The habits and growth postures of these leaders could be indicative of the kind of impact these leaders have in nonprofit organizations: "The principle

of the continuity of experience may operate so as to leave a person arrested on a low plane of development, in a way in which limits later capacity for growth" (Dewey, 1997, p. 38).

      Interaction. The second principle for a theory of experience relevant for an exploration of nonprofit crossover leadership is interaction. Interaction is the interplay of objective and internal conditions, which together have equal interpretive value for determining the "educational function and force" of an experience (Dewey, 1997, p. 42). Objective conditions are comprised of the environment in which the experience takes place: real or imagined, people or objects. "The environment, in other words, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had" (Dewey, 1997, p. 44).

      As educational principles, continuity and interaction create a unique lens for interpreting the experiences of nonprofit crossover leaders by considering the "educative significance and value" (Dewey, 1997, pp. 44-45) of the transition. An educational perspective has an additional benefit for an exploration of nonprofit crossover leadership with regard to nonprofit leadership and management programs. Dewey's theory of experience is foundational to developing a philosophy of education instrumental in shaping such programs in any academic environment: "Education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience—which is always the actual life-experience of some individual" (Dewey, 1997, p. 89). Taken together, an educational perspective on nonprofit crossover leadership could have value for educators, nonprofit organizations, as well as for the leaders themselves.

Theoretical Frameworks Selected for the Study

      The theoretical models found in the literature on sector switching reflect a dual approach to understanding the phenomenon: individual and organizational. From the individual approach,

previous researchers used social cognitive career theory to explore the development of career interest and the subsequent career choices individuals make over time. From the organizational approach, previous researchers used open-systems theory to analyze the interconnectedness of various elements of organizational life, as well as the environmental context in which organizations operate. These approaches provided great insight into sector switching, but additional theoretical frameworks offer further understanding.

Following the individual-organizational approach, I considered a variety of leadership and organizational theories and adopted two lenses of analysis for the data from my study that seemed to best fit my findings. Both have shared conceptual origins in psychology, sociology, education, and organizational theory, but more succinctly model the concepts I wanted to investigate in my study. Reflecting the individual level, I selected authentic leadership theory to gain better understanding of the motivations and values of the participants. On the organizational level, I chose the four-frames model of organizational leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2017) to analyze the perspectives participants operated from in their sector crossover experiences. I provide a detailed introduction of both theoretical models in this chapter and refer back to them in my data analysis in Chapter Six.

Authentic Leadership Theory

The concept of authenticity is understood to have ancient origins in Greek philosophical maxims, like "be true to oneself" and "know thyself," but authentic leadership as a theoretical concept of leadership studies first appeared in scholarly literature in the 1960s and underwent a series of definitional evolutions over the past several decades (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis & Dickens, 2011). Emerging from the fields of sociology and education, authentic leadership also has conceptual roots in humanistic and positive psychology (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) and has

gained attention in academic and practitioner literature (Banks, McCauley, Gardner, and Guler, 2015; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis & Dickens, 2011), most notably in leadership books written or co-authored by Bill George (2003, 2007, 2015), the former chief executive officer of Medtronic. Other researchers provided additional nuances to the construct, including the role weaknesses play in the development of authentic leadership (Diddams & Chang, 2012) and how authentic leadership relates to other leadership theories: transformational leadership theory (Banks, McCauley, Gardner & Guler, 2016); transformational, charismatic, servant, and spiritual leadership theory, and ethical leadership theories (Avolio & Gardner, 2005); and transformational and ethical leadership theories (Walumbwa, et al., 2008).

Northouse (2016) described authentic leadership theory as "one of the newest areas of leadership research" and acknowledged is "is still in the formative phase of development," (p. 195). As result, there are differing understandings of what authentic leadership entails. Northouse (2016) identified three approaches in recent literature. The first approach, *intrapersonal*, emphasizes the inner world of the leader. Grounded in this perspective, the research of Shamir and Eilam (2005) considered authentic leaders as having a clear sense of self and purpose in the world:

> Leaders who are authentic in the sense discussed here, namely possess a psychologically central leadership identity, have self-concordant goals and high self-concept clarity, and express themselves in their leadership role are more likely than inauthentic leaders to find the inner strength and internal compass to support them and guide them when dealing with their challenges. (p. 400)

Shamir and Eilam (2005) also discussed the importance of the authentic response of followers in the conceptualization of authentic leadership (pp. 400-401). The inclusion of follower response reflects a second approach to characterize authentic leadership, identified by Northouse (2016) as *interpersonal*. "Authenticity emerges from the interactions between leaders and followers. It is

a reciprocal process because leaders affect followers and followers affect leaders," (Northouse, 2016, p. 196). A third approach, *developmental*, emphasizes how authentic leadership is formed in a person. Authentic leadership is understood as something that can be "nurtured" as result of positive and negative life experiences "such as a severe illness or a new career," (Northouse, 2016, p. 196). In their discussion of the development of authentic leadership in people, Shamir and Eilam (2005) noted the role of "life-stories" to "establish coherent connections among life events," (p. 402).

Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) produced the most durable conceptualization of authentic leadership. Their research refined previous definitions to operationalize a measure of authentic leadership, the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), and collapsed the theoretical components to four main factors: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective (Walumbwa, et al., 2008, pp. 95-97). While other compositional constructs still operate in practitioner and scholarly literature (Gardner, et al. 2011), the four-component approach is regarded as the "foundation for a theory of authentic leadership," (Northouse, 2016, p. 202). Authentic leadership may be newer among leadership theories, but has made significant gains in grounding and standardization.

The Four-Frames Model of Organizational Leadership

Bolman and Deal (2017) synthesized various conceptualizations of leadership into a comprehensive model of leadership. Rather than advocating for a single best approach to leadership, the four frames — structural, human resource, political, and symbolic — reflect multiple ways of interpreting the leadership context. Used as "windows, maps, tools, lenses, orientations, prisms, and perspectives" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, pp. 11-12), leaders can alternate between frames, or re-frame, to make sense of their organizational context and define their

approach forward. The four frames and the ability to reframe offer an insightful analytic lens from which to understand the experience of participants in my study as they crossed organizational contexts from for-profit to nonprofit.

The structural frame. According to Bolman and Deal (2017), the structural frame is "oldest and most popular way of thinking about organizations," (p. 43). The perspective has roots from the early part of the 20th century in Frederick W. Taylor's "scientific management" approach to organizational efficiency as well as Max Weber's "monocratic bureaucracy" model, which emphasizes a rational approach to organization design. Consequently, the structural frame is associated with the metaphor "organization as factory," (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 17) and follows six core assumptions (p. 47):

1. Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives.

2. Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor.

3. Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh.

4. Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures.

5. Structures must be designed to fit an organization's current circumstances (including its goals, technology, workforce, and environment).

6. Problems arise and performance suffers from structural deficiencies, which can be remedied through analysis and restructuring.

The key challenge leaders identify using the structural frame is *organizational misalignment* and believe "reorganization or redesign is needed to remedy the mismatch," (p. 17). Approaches to correcting alignment include vertical coordination — authority/hierarchy, goals and objectives, rules and policies, standard operating procedures, benchmarking, planning and control systems/measurement, action planning (Bolman & Deal, 2017, pp. 55-58)— and

restructuring in light of environmental shifts, technology changes, organizational growth, and leadership changes (pp. 91-92). In prioritizing these actions, leaders ultimately seek to improve organizational performance and impact.

      The human resource frame. In contrast to the structural frame, the human resource frame emphasizes the human side of organizations and developed out of the work of Mary Parker Follet and Elton Mayo, who in the early to mid 20th century, "questioned a century-old, deeply held assumption—that workers had no rights beyond a paycheck," (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 117). Attention is given to interpersonal relationships between organizational members — between employees as well as between managers and employees — who are all recognized as "individuals with needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations," (p. 17). This perspective is perhaps best epitomized in the slogan: "Our most important asset is our people," (p. 113).

      The human resource frame is associated with the metaphor "organization as extended family" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 17) and follows a set of four core assumptions (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 118):

1. Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse.

2. People and organizations need each other. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities.

3. When the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffers. Individuals are exploited or exploit the organization—or both become victims.

4. A good fit benefits both. Individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed.

The term organizational-individual "fit" can be problematic as it has been — and unfortunately still is — used in some cases to justify hiring and retention practices that benefit the dominant culture of an organization. Historically, this has profound impact on people of color and underrepresented communities. My understanding of Bolman & Deal's (2017) use of the term is

that it is not intended to support these discriminatory practices. However, any application of

"fit" as criterion for employment must take into consideration unconscious bias that could

compromise equitable practices for all employees.

The key challenge leaders identify using the human resource frame is *employee*

motivation and believe "the essential task of management is to arrange conditions so that people

can achieve their own goals best by directing efforts toward organizational rewards," (McGregor

as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 123). Leaders using the human resource frame stress the

importance of understanding and responding to employee and customer needs and perceive

satisfaction as primary motivation for employee performance. Key words and practices in this

approach to organizational leadership include: investing in people, flexibility, capacity,

relationships, personal/human needs; hire, retain, invest in, empower, and promote the right

people; egalitarianism and diversity; training and organization development; emotional

intelligence.

The political frame. Rooted in the field of political science, the political frame homes in

on the idea that organizations almost universally have to compete for power and limited

resources in order to operate. The result of this situation is a context in which conflict is a

normal part of daily organizational life: "Conflict is rampant because of enduring differences in

needs, perspectives, and lifestyles among contending individuals and groups. Bargaining,

negotiation, coercion, and compromise are a normal part of everyday life," (p. 16). The political

frame is associated with the metaphor "organization as arena, contest, or jungle" (Bolman &

Deal, 2017, p. 17-18) and follows five core assumptions (pp. 194-195):

1. Organizations are coalitions of assorted individuals and interest groups.

2. Coalition members have enduring differences in values, beliefs, information, interests,
   and perceptions of reality.

3. Most important decisions involve allocating scare resources — who gets what.

4. Scare resources and enduring differences put conflict at the center of day-to-day dynamics and make power the most important asset.

5. Goals and definitions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own interests.

In the political frame, conflict is not understood to be inherently negative as it might be in the structural and human resource frames. Instead, the key challenges leaders identify using the political frame are *extreme imbalances* from concentrated power "in the wrong places" or *organizational inactivity* from dispersed power such that "nothing gets done," (p. 16). Leaders using the political frame have to successfully navigate power dynamics and form coalitions as interests and issues come and go over different seasons of organizational life. They do this by assessing sources of power in an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017, pp. 192-193) and by leveraging their skills in setting the agenda, mapping the political terrain, networking and forming coalitions, and bargaining and negotiating (pp. 204-213).

The symbolic frame. Grounded in social and cultural anthropology, the symbolic frame attends to culture, symbols, and spirit. Whereas the structural frame prioritizes order and efficiency, the human resource frame relationships and motivation, and the political frame coalitions and power, the symbolic frame elevates organizational culture and meaning: "It centers on complexity and ambiguity and emphasizes the idea that symbols mediate the meaning of work and anchor culture," (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 263). The symbolic frame is associated with the metaphor "organizations as temples, tribes, theaters, or carnivals" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 18) and follows five core assumptions (p. 241-242):

1. What is most important is not what happens but what it means.

2. Activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience life differently.

3. Facing uncertainty and ambiguity, people create symbols to resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith.

4. Events and processes are often more important for what is expressed than for what is produced. Their emblematic form weaves a tapestry of secular myths, heroes and heroines, rituals, ceremonies, and stories to help people find purpose and passion.

5. Culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise to accomplish desired ends.

The key challenge leaders identify using the symbolic frame is *meaningful work*.

Problems come "when actors don't play their parts appropriately, symbols lose their meaning, or ceremonies and rituals lose their potency" and are solved when leaders "rekindle the expressive or spiritual side of organizations through the use of symbol, myth, and magic," (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 18). Leaders using the symbolic frame undergird work activities by focusing on myths, vision, and values (Bolman & Deal, 2017, pp. 242-245), elevating organizational heroes and heroines (pp. 245-247), telling stories and fairytales (pp. 247-250), establishing daily rituals (pp. 250-254), staging ceremonies (pp. 254-256), and engaging in metaphors, humor, and play (pp 256-257) that draw out a more purposeful organizational context and culture.

Summary

The amount of published literature on sector switching is extremely limited and even including non-scholarly sources yielded few results. Nevertheless, I reviewed the available literature on cross-sector leadership, organizing it chronologically by the type of literature in which it was found: professional, doctoral, and published scholarly literature. I then conducted an analysis of the methodologies used in the literature on sector switching and presented a summary of them. From this theoretical foundation in the literature, I reviewed other potential theoretical perspectives that provide insight into the experience of sector crossing, as well as the set of analytic lenses I selected for my study: authentic leadership and the four-frames of organizational leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended researchers "make explicit the larger philosophical ideas they espouse" (p. 5) to help explain their selection of methodological approach. Philosophical worldviews, defined as "general philosophical orientations about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study" (p. 5), guide research design and study procedures. The authors outlined four philosophical worldviews frequently found in the literature: postpositivist, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic (pp. 5-11). I begin this chapter by identifying my philosophical worldview and then explain the research design and methods I used for my study.

Assumptions associated with the postpositivist approach generally support traditional scientific method, seeking to confirm hypotheses through observation of objective reality. Constructivism begins with the assumption that reality is grounded in subjective meaning developed through individual and social interactions. Consequently, researchers from this perspective "focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). The transformative worldview presumes an intersection of research and socio-political change, emphases contemporary social issues like "empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation" (p. 9), and often employs collaborative methods that include the participants in the design and analysis of the research. Finally, the pragmatic worldview underscores the value of "what works" (p. 10) through the application of whatever methods best address the research question and problem. These worldviews undergird quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches to research and inform research design and methods of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.

I approached my study from the constructivist worldview. My own perspective developed from working in and with the nonprofit sector and I was interested in studying the perspectives of others with similar contextual experiences. Nonprofit culture is not monolithic and the experience of sector switching is unique to the backgrounds and contexts of the people who engage in it. I resonate with constructivist assumptions "of human beings as actively constructing knowledge, in their own subjective and intersubjective realities and in contextually specific ways" (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014, p. 183). Other philosophical worldviews would have produced equally valid and important research outcomes, but constructivism was the perspective from which I designed and conducted my study.

Research Design

The focus of my research was the experience of sector switching, particularly the experience of leaders from the for-profit sector who transitioned to executive positions in nonprofit organizations. Consistent with a constructivist worldview, I used a qualitative approach "for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). In particular, I selected a phenomenological approach to explore the "individual lived meaning" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 19) of nonprofit crossover leadership.

Qualitative research "is a broad approach to the study of social phenomenon" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 3). According to Flick (2014), "Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it," (p. 5). Qualitative research methodology aligned with my constructivist approach and also matched Mills and Birks (2014) emphasis on the importance of aligning

research questions and methodology: "A well-constructed research question will guide the selection of an appropriate methodology and development of the research design," (p. 10). A qualitative approach proved to be an effective way to explore my research questions about the motivations and experience of people who left the for-profit sector to become nonprofit executives: Why do leaders choose to leave the for-profit sector to become nonprofit executives? How do these leaders describe their crossover experience? What perspective and priorities do nonprofit crossover leaders bring to their nonprofit organizations?

I chose a phenomenological approach because of four central concepts undergirding the method. First and foremost, among the reasons to use a phenomenological approach was the ability to focus on the common experience of crossing sectors, instead of on the leaders themselves. Creswell (2016) described a defining characteristic of phenomenological studies as examining the "cognitive representations or images" of a common phenomenon shared among a group of individuals (p. 115). I wanted to explore the phenomenon of crossover leadership from the perspective of nonprofit leaders who formerly worked in for-profit contexts. Focusing on the phenomenon, instead of the leaders themselves, allowed for a more "exhaustive" (Creswell, 2016, p. 106) understanding of the experience, building toward the "essence" (p. 82) of the phenomenon.

Second, an appealing application of a phenomenological approach was the development of policies and practices based on a deep understanding of the common experiences of a set of individuals (Creswell, 2016, p. 81). In my investigation of crossover leadership, this proved to be helpful for the participants as they considered their career pathways into nonprofit leadership and abstracted an understanding of how their for-profit leadership background applied to a nonprofit context. The phenomenological approach also allowed me to offer a set of

recommendations for nonprofit boards seeking to hire executives with for-profit backgrounds, as well as for educational institutions that offer programs in nonprofit leadership and management. Each of these applications is addressed for consideration in Chapter Seven.

Third, phenomenology — especially the more recently developed model of interpretive phenomenology (Bazeley, 2013) — utilized a psychological approach for understanding "something that would have already been the subject of reflection, thinking, and feeling by the experiencing person" (p. 193). Participants in my study did not arbitrarily leave their for-profit positions, but rather engaged in thoughtful and sometimes lengthy processes of moving beyond barriers to make the shift. Often significant financial and social costs accompanied this transition. Bazeley (2013) referenced a challenge created by this line of inquiry — dubbed the "double hermeneutic" by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin — whereby the researcher attempts to "make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to [her or himself]" (p. 194). The stories participants told helped justify their career change across sectors, though it is likely the stories changed in shape and value over time and with experience in their roles. A phenomenological approach helped focus on a motivating narrative component to the crossover experience as told through their career pathway stories.

A fourth reason for utilizing a phenomenological approach was its emphasis on the meaning of a subjective experience to a participant, rather than the factual elements of an experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Because of my background in nonprofit leadership, phenomenology became a helpful tool for me as a researcher to engage in the discipline of bracketing out my experience in order to understand more clearly the participants' perspectives. Although this is a common goal in most forms of qualitative research, phenomenology seemed to embrace this approach in its purest form.

Role of the Researcher

My study sought to identify the meaningful reality of participants in their experience as nonprofit crossover leaders. It also meant acknowledging that, as a qualitative researcher, I was part of the construction of that reality (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Because "qualitative research is interpretive research" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 183), I include a brief reflexive statement before describing my research methods.

Engagement in a study of crossover leadership had personal connection for me. I am a crossover leader, though not in the same sense as the participants in my study. I worked in the nonprofit sector for nearly 15 years before I started my own private practice as a consultant to nonprofit organizations. Currently, I work in the public sector. In each of these contexts, I also witnessed firsthand the leadership of others who crossed from the for-profit sector to nonprofit and public organizations. Some successfully navigated the transition and others seemed to struggle. These experiences with sector switching captured my attention and were the genesis of my study.

I found written reflection on preconceptions — before and during the study — a helpful way to situate myself authentically and honestly. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommended researchers react to collected data "as if they do not know what it means" (p. 25) in order to approach the topic with some degree of objectivity. Similarly, Creswell (2013) advocated for qualitative researchers to "suspend our understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity," (p. 83). I attempted to approach my research with this kind of academic neutrality and purposefully interviewed participants in organizations with whom I had no prior relationship. In addition to these measures to mitigate personal bias, I obtained permission from the institutional review board to ensure the highest levels of integrity in my research.

Institutional Review Board

Following protocol for research involving human subjects, I completed and submitted the appropriate documents to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I received approval prior to engaging with participant recruitment and data collection and submitted continuing review requests to maintain active status over the course of my study. Examples of IRB-approved forms used in my study are included as appendices, including an informed consent form (Appendix B), initial contact email (Appendix C), and sample interview questions (Appendix D).

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

I recruited participants on a voluntary basis through snowball sampling of subjects fitting the research parameters and by referral. Initial contact was through email, citing names of referring associates for credibility. As needed, I followed up with a second email to encourage participation. Not everyone I contacted chose to participate. Some simply did not respond to my invitation. Others considered the opportunity, but elected not to participate due to situational or time constraints. Participating subjects were given the opportunity to decline the interview or withdraw at any point in the research.

I conducted interviews with eight people meeting my research parameters of prior experience in the for-profit sector and current employment as a nonprofit executive (Table 3). Preferred qualifications included having formal education in business, economics, or finance on either the undergraduate or graduate level. Seven of eight participants met this preferred qualification. Six of the eight had master of business administration (MBA) degrees. Participants represented a wide geographic range within the United States with work locations in Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Washington, D.C. I made attempts to balance the participant pool by gender and ethnic/cultural background. While I did

not formally collect demographic information like ethnic and cultural background, gender, and sexual orientation as part of my study, the majority of participants likely identify as white, five presented as men and three as women, and one participant self-identified as a gay male. Each of the participants had prior professional experience in the for-profit sector and had shifted to executive roles in nonprofit organizations and associations. I considered size and budget of their nonprofit contexts, but did not find differentiation necessary for the focus of my analysis.

Table 3.

List of Participants and Qualifications for Study

Pseudonym	Study Qualifications		Preferred Qualifications		Total Prior Years in a Nonprofit Role
	Years at Current Nonprofit (at time of interview)	Title	Formal Education in Business, Economics, or Finance	MBA	
Benita	4	Chief Executive Officer	Yes	Yes	6
Brad	4	Chief Experience Officer	Yes	No	-
Dale	4	Chief Executive Officer	Yes	Yes	-
Dean	9	President	Yes	Yes	-
Mia	4	Executive Director	Yes	Yes	5
Reed	5	Chief Executive Officer	Yes	Yes	8
Robby	3	Vice President of Marketing	No	No	5
Shalene	5	Director of Operations	Yes	Yes	-

Data Collection

I conducted a series of eight semi-structured interviews lasting 60-90 minutes with nonprofit leaders who had prior work experience in the for-profit sector. The method of semi-structured interviews is a primary tool of phenomenological study (Usher & Jackson, 2014) and

helps "avoid being leading or causing the participant to give answers they think the researcher wants to hear" (p. 188-189). Additionally, maintaining a less structured and more conversational tone allowed me to approach the participants in a "natural, unobtrusive, and nonthreatening manner" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 39) that built rapport and I believe resulted in greater participant transparency and better data overall.

Consistent with a qualitative approach, I invited all participants to interview on site at their current workplace in order to maintain a "natural setting" (Creswell, 2016, p. 45). On site interviews allow the researcher to observe the participants' actions and behaviors in their work setting and create the opportunity to collect observer data about the workplace setting itself. Because of travel limitations, only one interview occurred in-person and on-site. I conducted the remaining interviews virtually using a secure videoconferencing platform that allowed me to record the conversation for later transcription.

I asked participants prior to the interview to provide a positional organization chart (i.e., no names) of their senior leaders and direct reports. Analysis of this data generated better understanding of their work contexts before engaging in the interviews. Participants referred to the organization chart during the interviews to explain how their organizations were set up and to describe any changes they made to the organizational structure since becoming an executive at the nonprofit. The information I asked about the senior leaders and direct reports was limited to tenure at the organization, prior work experience, and educational background.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend a sample size of three to ten participants for phenomenological studies based on their review of qualitative research studies (p. 186). I ended data collection after the eighth participant interview, which falls within that anticipated range. However, grounded theory offers another gauge of sufficient data depth: saturation. Data

saturation is the point at which "gathering fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 186). Charmaz (2006) explained the researcher could consider the amount of gathered data sufficient by asking a set of questions:

1. Have I collected enough background data about persons, processes, and settings to have ready recall and to understand and portray the full range of contexts of the study?

2. Have I gained detailed descriptions of a range of participant views and actions?

3. Do the data reveal what lies beneath the surface?

4. Are the data sufficient to reveal changes over time?

5. Have I gained multiple views of the participants' range of actions?

6. Have I gathered data that enable me to develop analytic categories?

7. What kinds of comparisons can I make between data? How do these comparisons generate and inform my ideas?

I watched for these indicators of data saturation during my study and confirmed after eight interviews the data reached quality levels that met Charmaz's (2006) "rich and sufficient" standards (p. 18).

Data Analysis

I collected and analyzed data from the interviews using phenomenological procedures. I used a transcription service to obtain written documentation of the interviews and then reviewed each for accuracy and to directly saturate myself in the data. In order to stay as intimate with the data as possible, I coded the data manually using NVivo, instead of using automated qualitative software. I coded the transcripts for "significant statements" to develop "clusters of meaning" (Moustakas in Creswell, 2016, p. 82) on the phenomenon of crossover leadership. After pulling out resulting themes, I constructed textural and structural descriptions of the crossover experiences of my participants in order to create an essential understanding of crossover leadership, including motivations and approaches of the leaders in their nonprofit context.

Following the advice of Bazeley (2013), I engaged in three additional research practices to help

process the data collected from participant interviews. First, during and after each interview, I

recorded field notes to capture observations beyond the participant responses. Topics included

physical descriptions of the work environment and intuitive impressions from the interview

experience itself. Second, I wrote memos after listening to each interview to help process the

data and to capture impressions and observations. Because my data analysis spanned several

months, I re-engaged in the memo writing process later to update my perspective and to help

identify emerging themes in the data. Third, I engaged in journal writing exercises to record

developing thoughts that field notes and memos did not otherwise capture.

Reliability and Validity

Marshall and Rossman (2011) acknowledged that *reliability* and *validity* are research

terms "borrowed from more quantitative approaches," but nonetheless are foundational to the

"trustworthiness" and "soundness" of qualitative data despite variation in conceptualization (p.

39). Creswell and Creswell (2018) described *quantitative reliability* as a research approach

"consistent across different researchers and among different projects" (p. 199). I designed my

study in accordance with accepted phenomenological practices (Usher & Jackson, 2014), as

described in the earlier sections on data collection and data analysis, to ensure the reliability of

my research findings. Other practices I employed to promote reliability included checking

transcripts for mistakes through repeated audio reviewing and maintaining consistency in code

and theme development (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 201-202).

Qualitative validity refers to procedures that support "the accuracy of the findings"

(Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 199). Procedural strategies used in my study included

reflective listening during the interviews to check my understanding of what participants said,

rich description of the findings that captured larger portions of participant stories and actual phrasings, and the inclusion of discrepant information that countered trends within the identified themes (pp. 200-201).

Ethical Considerations

The consideration of ethics and confidentiality was a high priority for this study in order to assure participant security and to encourage transparency during interviews. To this end, I implemented several actions in conjunction with my research. First, all participants signed a consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board. The consent form explained the nature and purpose of the study, outlined study procedures and expectations of them as participants, declared any risks and benefits involved, and clearly articulated steps being taken to ensure their confidentiality. I emailed consent forms to the participants ahead of time. Even if I received a signed consent beforehand, I verbally reviewed the consent form with each participant at the start of the interviews. I will keep a signed copy of the consent forms in my permanent records.

Second, all records — including participant records, audio files, transcripts of interviews, and archived data analyses on any qualitative research software — was kept confidential. These records are stored electronically on my computer and/or smart phone, which are both password protected (only known to me). I will delete audio recordings of the interviews two years after completing my study, but requested permission to retain transcriptions indefinitely.

Third, I withheld real names and avoided using identifying descriptions of the participants and their organizations from all written documentation and presentations of the study. I assigned pseudonyms to all participants, to current and past workplaces, as well as to educational institutions they attended. A master list of participant information and pseudonyms

is on my computer in a separate, password-protected file and will be deleted two years after completing my study.

Fourth, whenever possible, I interviewed participants on-site at their current place of work. In addition to the methodological benefits discussed earlier in this paper, I took this safety measure in order to minimize any risk of travel associated with the study. For in-person and virtual interviews, I requested participants determine a place on site that they considered to be confidential and secure.

In addition to these four steps to maintain participant confidentiality, I anticipated other effects of the study. The transformative effect on participants is part of the rich history of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 43) and is part of the "reciprocity" (Creswell, 2016, p. 60) that gives something back to the participants. Some participants found the interviews cathartic and affirming, especially for those who had not dedicated prior reflection to their experience of crossing sectors. Similarly, Creswell (2016) cautioned against leaving participants feeling "abandoned" (p. 55) after the completion of the study. I concluded each interview with a brief coaching experience, as needed, and directed participants toward any follow up steps, materials, or resources I thought might be beneficial to the continued processing of their sector crossover experiences. This action is consistent with the approach of qualitative research conducted with the intent of bringing about participant empowerment and social change (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 43). I am pleased to have offered this benefit of qualitative research to participants through my study.

Summary

In this chapter, I began with a discussion of the philosophical worldview informing my research design and methods. I described my qualitative approach, my selection of

phenomenological methods, as well as my role as a researcher. I reviewed institutional review board protocol followed, along with my approaches to participant recruitment and selection, data collection, data analysis, and the reliability and validity of my data. I ended with ethical considerations undergirding my research design.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CROSSOVER LEADER

My study of crossover leaders involved people whose for-profit careers eventually led them to make a shift to the nonprofit sector. Over the course of the interviews, I investigated their stories of career progression and explored their initial experiences in nonprofit organizations as well as the changes they championed. In this chapter, I show how different experiences and routes to pursuing a career eventually led to the discovery of motivation for non-profit work. The next chapter describes their initial experiences in the non-profit sector.

I started my interviews with participants using the following open-ended question, "What got you to where you are today?" The question served as an opportunity for the participants to tell their personal "crossover" story. The participants told a career story, starting with their undergraduate education or first job, followed by a series of for-profit jobs, and concluding with their current nonprofit role. After or while offering a rundown of their career history and experiences, participants engaged in different forms of self-reflection. Some told a familiar and rehearsed story about their sense of purpose and mission, while others composed their story by thinking back and reconstructing their career path seemingly for the first time. Using an emergent design, I listened actively to their stories and found the most common thread within the stories involved an awareness of their motivation to work in the nonprofit sector.

All participants possessed complex career histories that included an upward progression — sometimes linear, sometimes evolutionary — in and across organizations. Their career pathways eventually led them to service in the nonprofit sector. While each faced unique circumstances, two themes related to the connecting thread of motivation emerged from their stories. The first theme is the conscious awareness of mission. Mission is the idea that there is a focused purpose for activity or for existence itself. Unprompted, the participants described

themselves as serving a greater purpose through their careers. For all but one participant, this "existential justification" or reason for existence, was not uniquely spiritual. While the specific missions varied, all participants described the importance of making a difference in the lives of other people.

The second theme related to motivation involved beliefs, values, and ethics. Whether the origin was religious, familial, or personal experience, participants described elements of an ethical and value-based framework shaping how they lived their lives. This framework proved central to how participants made sense of the world and their work in it. I organized the concepts in this overall framework as points on an "internal compass," based on an image used by one of the participants.

Mission – Making a Difference for Others

A prominent theme across all interviews involved a clear sense of mission or purpose in life. Participants viewed mission as making a positive contribution to the world. In some cases, participants articulated their mission in a formal statement. Others used repeated words and abstract concepts that could be easily traced to awareness of a sense of purpose. While the overall theme of mission among the participants can be simplified into the generic sentiment, "to make a difference," participants formed unique expressions of their sense of mission.

Participants told a "career story," linking a chronological set of experiences to their mission for working in the nonprofit sector. For some, their sense of mission developed early on either in an entry-level position or a college experience. The mission actively served as a guiding force that eventually brought them to an executive role in a nonprofit organization. For others, their sense of mission became clearer through career transitions. The discovery of

mission became part of their search for a meaningful career, which some participants did not expect would lead them to the nonprofit sector.

I organized the participants' career pathways stories below into two sections based on when they first took notice of their mission and its subsequent development. I then describe how that mission coincided with their career pathway stories and show its importance to their sense of professional purpose and meaning.

Early Knowledge of Mission

Three participants described having awareness of a personal mission early in their careers. Knowledge of this mission guided them as they accepted roles in organizations and helped them determine when it was time to look for a job more aligned with their mission. A sense of personal mission proved instrumental in getting them to eventually seek nonprofit executive roles. Their sense of mission did not preclude a nonprofit career destination and may not keep them permanently in the nonprofit sector in the future, but made nonprofit leadership roles a good fit with their professional purpose and ambitions.

Reed's mission involved a desire to work for the common good. Beginning in high school and continuing through college, Reed worked in banking and gained experience early on in management. After finishing his undergraduate degree in business, he hoped to find a job in human resources in a Fortune 100 company where he could work his way up the chain of command. However, with the economy in recession at the time and limited job opportunities, he instead pursued a graduate degree in counseling and human development. The program was oriented toward higher education and student affairs and he worked in that field for a couple of years, supporting the development of programs and initiatives on college campuses, before feeling drawn to apply his experience with organization development more broadly.

Reed joined a major consulting firm and helped build the practice while also completing

an MBA from a prominent university. It was at that point he had a significant realization:

> The people at the top of the organization were working just as hard as the people coming up the organization in that they were doing 60, and 70, and 80-hour workweeks. I was like, huh, is this ever going to stop? If it's not, and this is going to be my life, am I enjoying the type of work that I'm doing and the type of impact that I'm having?"

Reflecting on his career path in for-profit organizations, Reed wondered if it would be more

satisfying to work in a corporate foundation or a large nonprofit, where "I could take my

business mindset to help the organization and also use that to help people."

His question was rooted in a philosophy he embraced during an undergraduate leadership

training experience: "I have a personal mission in life and it's to leave the world a better place

than when I got here." He explained this was a consistent thread throughout his career.

> There's always been a touch of what I've done that had to have that piece a part of it. What I very quickly learned about myself was that I wasn't beholden to an organization; I was beholden to my mission. And if I was in an organization where my mission didn't connect to the organization and the work I was doing then I needed to go find something else to do.

It was at this point in Reed's career journey that he first ventured into the nonprofit sector, but

his path doubled back to the for-profit sector one more time before he settled more permanently

in nonprofit roles. Reed currently serves as chief executive officer (CEO) of a nonprofit focused

on improving the physical work environments of organizations.

Immediately after completing her undergraduate degree, Mia went to work at a small

consulting firm as an investment consultant for physical assets on higher education campuses. It

was a young consultant's ideal: frequent travel, fun, and long hours in work that she found

interesting and satisfying. "It was good for a young professional." The firm had developed a

model of analysis she felt was "intelligent" and served its clients' needs well. However, after

disillusionment with the business model and some questionable leadership decisions, Mia

wondered if she might find nonprofit work a more suitable environment. She moved through successive positions at two universities, unsatisfied that one of them "was not a research-based organization." Mia took a short-term role as a researcher at an engineering firm "because of the science aspect of it." She later accepted a position at a university-based research center formed after the 2008 financial crisis to influence nonpartisan economic policy development and regulation to avert financial crises on the national level. The mission of the center resonated with Mia, but so did the intelligent "mash up" with private sector practice:

> This was the other time when I thought, 'What we are doing is brilliant.' That started even with the consulting despite all of the ethical issues. I thought what we were doing was brilliant. That carried all the way through to this financial policy center.

> For Mia, the concept of "brilliance" is central to her mission. While not ego-driven, her

pursuit of roles was driven by the intellectual stimulation of data analysis. Part way through her career pathway story, she paused to note, "I think by now you realize that I really like quantitative work." This mission, known early, prepared her for her next major career move. A position opened at an association whose mission is to promote research in education and finance with the intent of connecting academics and practitioners at an international level. She reflected, "If there was ever a natural progression this is probably it." When interviewed, she had been serving as executive director for three years and anticipated signing another three-year contract.

Starting his career at one of the largest corporations in America, Dale established himself over two decades as the guy who could "take a challenging situation and turn it into something amazing." Despite a rising success, he was "lured away" by a mid-sized bank and later by a financial services business as a high-level executive. He was working 70-hour weeks and was losing his family in the process. Despite his fear at the time of what others would think about his decision, he "truncated" his career with a step back into sales as part of "doing the right thing."

He made a career out of fixing troubled businesses and working himself out of a position, defining success not as "size of office and money," but as "the next good job." Dale tried his hand at executive coaching for a while, but wanted to return to a leadership role. Desiring a new experience and having previously served on nonprofit boards and doing philanthropy, he decided, "It's probably time to try to go lead a nonprofit." He was looking for something large and complex and found the nonprofit where, when interviewed, he served as president and chief executive officer. "I have died and gone to heaven."

Dale is now toward the end of his career journey, but discovered early on that a clear sense of purpose was the most important part of leadership. He referenced — by book and page number — business expert Max De Pree's philosophy that, "Leadership means having the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who permit you to lead them." This perspective allowed Dale to be driven by the mission at hand, regardless of sector context. "I was motivated by making a difference, either in the company, or in the clients we served, or potentially in society."

Discovery of Mission

The other five participants, Dean, Benita, Brad, Shalene and Robby, discovered their mission later in their career pathway stories. They refined their mission through the transition to or experience of their current nonprofit roles. This is not to suggest they lacked focus earlier in their careers, but rather they described how their experiences focused and sharpened their sense of mission as result of their nonprofit experience.

Dean knew early on that he wanted to go into the business world and chose a major in finance to give him a solid beginning that could take him in many directions. Right after college, he got a job with one of the most recognized business-consulting firms, aware that it would give

him a broad base of cross-industry experience and build his résumé for future positions. However, as he looked up the ladder it was apparent that with promotion would come an even more intense travel schedule, which "wasn't the kind of life that I wanted for myself, or for my family, ultimately."

That realization prompted a move to a large company in the food industry, at which time he also began a graduate degree in marketing at a highly rated university program. The company was acquired by a multinational corporation known for having solid commitment to leadership development, which benefited him as he gained more experience and exposure, resulting in higher profile assignments. With each step up, however, Dean never felt he was on the right path, "even though to the outside world, it looked like I was highly successful." He recalled:

> This notion, "To whom much is given, much is expected," was a central theme for me. I always felt like, it can't just be about me taking and getting more and more, there's got to be some way for me to be able to give back, or have a positive impact on society.

He received job offers from businesses and recruiters for other top, high profile jobs, but he felt "like they were just about the rest of the world's definition of success." Previous jobs had given him opportunity and exposure to volunteer at soup kitchens, hunger relief, and food banking — all of which had been very impactful to him. "Those sorts of experiences played into my decision because I felt like there were signs that I needed to pay attention to." At this point in his career pathway story, Dean recalled an impactful lesson taught by his pastor at a parish retreat:

> He talked about vocation being the intersection of two concentric circles. One is what you're really good at, but the other is "What does the world around you really need?" If you could figure out, sort of, the intersection of those two concentric circles, you've found your vocation. That made an impression on me, as well.

The lesson shaped Dean's drive toward a more mission oriented focus. When a job opportunity opened at a large nonprofit coordinating food distribution to people in need, it "was sort of the answer to many years of prayer and discernment, like there's something here that feels right."

With a degree in polymer science, Benita was trained as a researcher and began a successful career as a scientist in a company that later became a major pharmaceutical company. Despite her success, she was advised early on by people around her to always "try out different things." Taking that advice to heart, she moved into other work that gave her experience with marketing as well as with mergers and acquisitions. She took on international assignments with scientific organizations. She accepted senior roles doing research and development, running divisions and businesses within large multinational corporations. She worked in health sciences as a generalist and later became head of human resources, specializing in mergers and acquisitions. She also traveled extensively and studied internationally.

She described herself as having "always been very service oriented" and linked her interest in working for a nonprofit organization to one of her frustrations with for-profit businesses:

> Every time I would stand up in front of the executive committee, I would always think, "I am working my tail off for the benefit of these people who are very wealthy individuals." Good for them. I mean, I was being paid very fairly, but I always felt like I don't want this to be the thing I end up doing in my life. I really wanted to do something else.

When the prospect of working for a nonprofit organization landed on her doorstep, she thought to herself, "Oh, isn't that interesting," even though she confessed at the time she had "no clue what a nonprofit is." Over the course of 10 years and two nonprofit executive positions, Benita reflected she "learned that nonprofits have a really important role and that they do things that other organizations can't do and that they're things that need to be done, they have to be done." The experience of working in a nonprofit context refined Benita's service-orientation into a more specific mission she emphatically embraced. She summated, "We're tackling problems that need to be tackled for our society and for the global populations that I think are critically important, so I'm really pleased that I made the transition."

After finishing an undergraduate degree in English and economics, Brad could have gone a lot of different directions. He knew his first job was only a placeholder (sales for a beverage distributer), but because of what he described as a "contentment gene" he could have worked there longer:

> Too many people get caught up in levels and titles and wanting to be number one. There are a select few that they just need to be number one, and if they're anything less than number one they're not satisfied. That's just the opposite of the way I feel. I could be happy being a custodian in the right environment… or driving a truck [for the beverage distributer].

Brad's contentment was grounded in his developing sense of mission, which initially had three conditions needing to be fulfilled in a work setting: "getting paid fairly, doing good work where I feel like I'm making a difference, and the people are there." He later would add a fourth criterion — cause — to his formula. "That's come in later in the career." Altogether, these criteria determine "whether or not I'm doing this now or looking for something else."

Content as he was, Brad found an entry-level job working for an IT recruiter and eventually to a medical device company where he started in human resources and later moved the marketing department, first as manager and ultimately as director of sales training for a newly combined set of divisions. "I thought that was the pinnacle of my career." However, another organizational restructure that eliminated his position put Brad at career crossroads: to try for another position in the organization or accept a severance package and see what opportunity came next. While chaperoning at a camp with one of his children, he read a book a friend gave him about following your dreams. "So I'm in camp at night, with the flashlight in my sleeping bag while the boys are sleeping… and I'm reading this book, and it's just hitting home." He opted for opportunity and at just the right moment on his job search timeline, he accepted a job as a marketing executive for a nonprofit serving families, kids, and communities.

The medical device company had been strong on mission and customer focus, holding annual events where patients described how their lives had been changed by the technology. "It was important to me, but I don't think I realized it." What he found at the nonprofit was "a different kind of mission because it's much closer to home. It's the community you live in. It's the people around you—and it's kid-focused, which just felt really good."

Shalene began her career development with a desire to "help people." That intention led her to complete a degree in biology and begin medical school, but after one year into the program she decided it "wasn't the lifestyle and all of that that I wanted." Instead, she tried a different path as a technical research scientist and later completed an MBA "to go the business route."

She found a job that combined her prior experience in technical research and her business education, working for a pharmaceutical company doing technical research for corporate acquisitions. Shalene had a mixed experience working in the pharmaceutical industry. On the one hand, she felt good about the impact pharmaceuticals made to improve people's lives. On the other hand, connection to those people felt distant.

> Actually feeling like you were helping the consumer by what you're doing day to day, that was very hard to come by. Partially because it's such a slow process that you're like, "Are we really helping people?" You knew that you were, but it's very hard.

The company was acquired by another pharmaceutical and she, along with the rest of the corporate research staff, was laid off. A brief stint working for a manufacturing company left her feeling "like a cog in the machine" and not "like I was having a lot of impact in my day to day work. That's really what I was looking for."

Shalene found a job as director of operations at nonprofit serving kids with special needs. More than finding a job, Shalene found a cause that matched her desire to help people — and with it a new framework to express her career mission:

> I think that you have to be passionate about the cause. For me, I don't do this work directly. Behavior is not my background… but I love these clients and I love the people that serve them…. I want to be able to help an organization be the best organization that they can be, so that they can provide the best services to these kiddos.

Robby is a computer scientist who "got bit by the computer bug before anyone even knew what that was." He has advanced degrees in biophysics and chemistry and built a career on theoretical molecular modeling for pharmaceutical research and commercial software product design. His career path was highly specialized, but he developed a reputation that caught the attention of executive headhunters and fellow CEOs, which buoyed his career from one executive role to the next. Earlier on, he worked in data divisions of the Federal government, managing scientific databases. There he became aware of "the data problem," that not a lot of data in the sciences was shareable. While he moved on through a series of management positions, "productizing" research tools and selling them to chemical and drug companies, the concept of making public data "truly public" for "the greater good" was something that would not fully mature until his second nonprofit experience.

His first experience with a nonprofit was an academic society with nearly a half a billion-dollar budget that served the chemistry field by developing and managing what became a universal research database. From there, he returned to the for-profit sector, where he worked for several multi-million dollar companies doing product design and developing knowledge-based software, including work for a major software company in its life science division until a change in leadership closed the division to focus on other product lines.

At that point, he was "sitting at home, trying to decide what to do next" when a friend called needing an executive level person to help run the organization. Robby's past experience at a nonprofit was positive, but this was an entirely new venture and it took some convincing. However, conversations with the chief executive officer peaked his interest. "We talked about the greater good," as well the opportunity to be a part of "next evolution" of the commercial software business model that could turn the industry "on its ear." Ultimately, the role generated enough curiosity to self-talk him out of his uncertainty. "Well, let's try it for a while and see how it goes." He noted, "I just passed my three-year anniversary. It's been pretty cool."

Whether embedded in their minds early in life or discovered later through career development, all participants reported a sense of mission driving their professional pathways. Some were able to articulate their missions clearly, while other had a more abstract awareness of it. Regardless, mission was one of the unifying motivational components of their career pathway stories. A second theme that emerged from the stories told by the participants was an underlying framework of beliefs, ethics, and values.

Beliefs, Ethics, and Value-Base Framework: Following an Internal Compass

While not asked to describe and define their guiding beliefs, values, and ethics, participants included these elements in their descriptions of their career pathway and reflection on their professional experiences. For some, religious upbringing shaped the foundation of their perspective. Others attributed their family of origin as the source of their values and beliefs. They explained how they tried to make sense of the world and the values they brought into their work lives based on their family's core values. Most of the participants also learned from defining moments in their career journey – moments that shed light on how values shaped and influenced their decisions.

One participant creatively framed these beliefs, values, and ethics as an "internal compass" pointing him in the right direction. Playing off that imagery, I organized the belief, values, and ethical concepts described by the participants into the eight points on a compass (Figure 2).

NORTH
Positive social impact
- Economic, social environmental
- Health and well-being of people
- Closely associated with mission

NORTHWEST
Work relationships
- Desire for positive and healthy relationships with co-workers and supervisors
- Work relationships as partnerships

NORTHEAST
New experiences
- Passion for new ideas, experiences, applications of knowledge, perspectives
- Spirit of adventure, curiosity
- Socially-informed at entrepreneurialism

WEST
Meaning over money
- Openness to lower available compensation
- Prioritization of meaningful work
- Independent of financial status or life stage

EAST
Self-efficacy
- Confidence in value of what is brought/offered
- Belief in cross-sector application

SOUTHWEST
Integrity
- Honesty
- "Doing the right thing"
- Being true to onself, wholeness

SOUTHEAST
Family
- Awareness of and concern for how family perceives work
- Impact of work life or family as factor in career decision

SOUTH
Outcomes orientation
- Strategic priorities
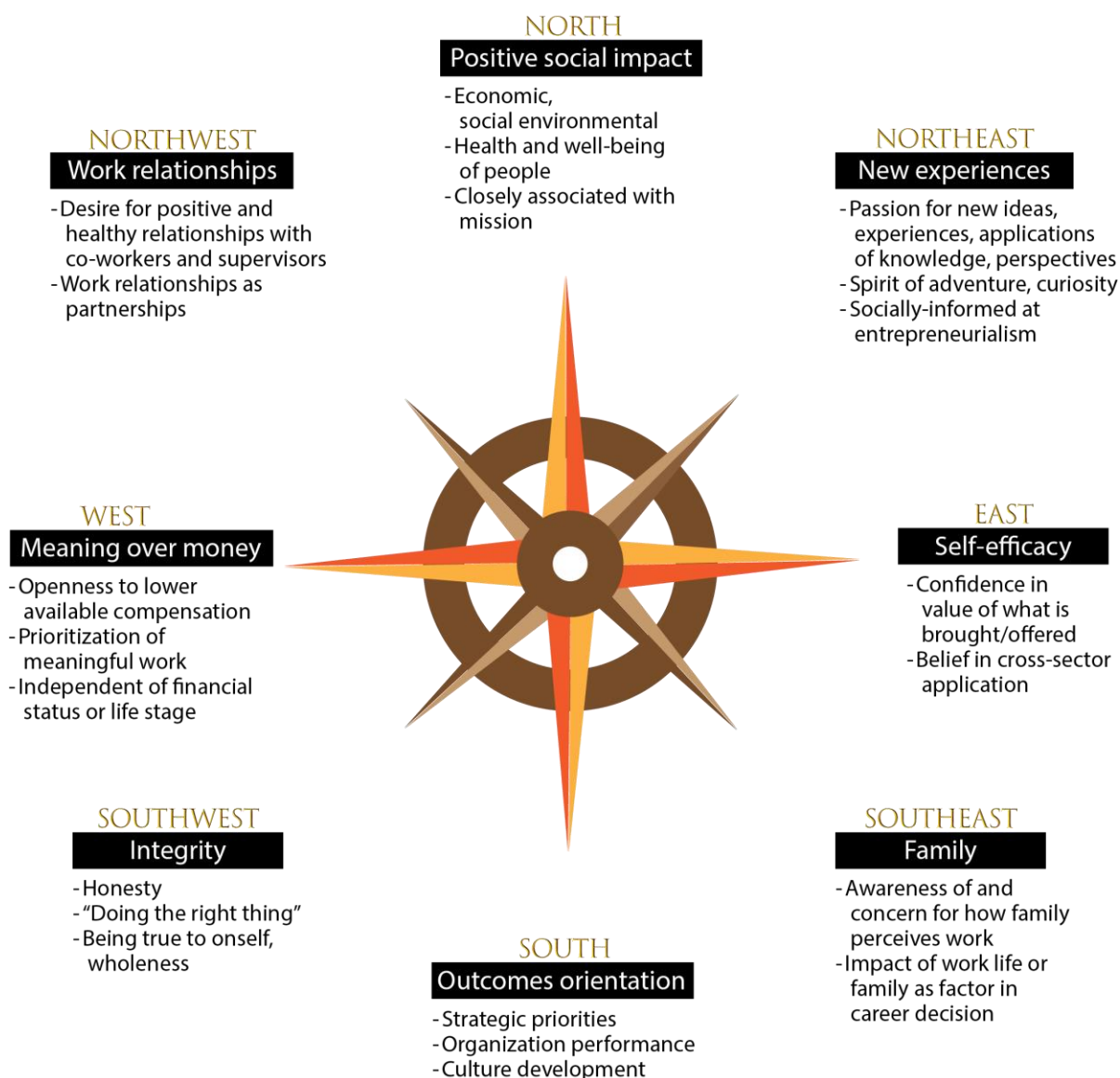- Organization performance
- Culture development

Figure 2. The internal compass of participants' beliefs, values, and ethics.

The four "cardinal directions" include fundamental elements described by all participants. The four "ordinal directions" were equally important, but had greater weight for some participants.

Cardinal Directions

The primary divisions on a compass are north, south, east, and west. They broadly define directions to guide travelers. Similarly, I discovered four common aspects of beliefs, values, and ethics in the participants' career pathway stories that indicated an unconscious, direction-setting framework: positive social impact, outcomes orientation, self-efficacy, and meaning over money. Because their defined or emergent missions ultimately established a primary point of orientation for the participants, I placed "positive social impact" in the north position on the compass. The other items in the framework are not intended to have any implied significance that may be associated with the other cardinal directions. However, I tried to be intentional about positioning them in the compass framework using a rough logic of "balance."

North: Positive social impact. Positive social impact is multidimensional. It includes economic, environmental, and societal improvements that affect the health and wellbeing of people. Closely associated with the theme of mission, all participants prioritized a value for making a positive impact on society through some aspect of their professional work. This was evident regardless if mission was defined earlier or later in their careers.

Three of the participants worked or previously worked in fields related to health research and the treatment of physical illness and developmental conditions. Shalene started on a career path with the intent of becoming a medical doctor and shifted career paths to continue in a direction that sought to improve people's health and wellbeing, first by doing pharmaceutical research and later in an organization dedicated to serving people with special needs. Benita and Robby pursued education in the field of polymer science to contribute toward the research and development of pharmaceuticals and molecular models designed to improve treatment through targeted medicines for specific groups of people based on genetic commonalities.

Two participants ended up in nonprofits founded to support food distribution to low-income populations. As part of his career pathway story, Dean recounted a transformative experience when he directly observed the disparity of available food within a community divided economically. Between the "McMansions" and the trailer parks, "you could see this sort of economic divide right before your eyes." This made a profound impression on him about the need to support social equity efforts. "If you were born on this side of the road, your life is gonna be completely different than if you were born on that side of the road. So much of that is just fate." Similarly, the disparity of food resources impacted Dale at an early age when delivering food baskets "to a family literally on the wrong side of the tracks, in a shack or something like I'd never seen in my life…. That left an indelible mark on my mind about the joy of giving to others."

Earlier in his career, Reed worked in a consulting role focused on corporate social responsibility (CSR). He struggled with the tension of trying to improve the image of clients that ultimately "weren't doing good things" because their products inherently caused negative environmental and social health impacts. Though the work was in some way creating positive social impact, he found greater value alignment with a foundation focused on corporate philanthropy and eventually with a large association promoting the positive impact of well-designed work environments on people's lives.

Mia leveraged her expertise in quantitative data and financial acumen in her work with an academically based economic policy center. Organizers founded the center after the 2008 financial crisis. She resonated with their effort to promote economic stability "in hopes that perhaps if we share unbiased research then policy makers and regulators could use that to inform their decisions and perhaps avoid the next financial crisis."

Brad experienced first-hand as a child the community impact of the nonprofit in which he now serves. "My dad died when I was nine and I remember the Christmas after that getting membership cards." This direct connection with the mission of the organization was part of what drew him to cross sectors. It was "the idea of latching onto a mission that was closer" to him personally, to his community, and to kids in need of a place to belong.

Positive social impact was a primary driver for my crossover leader study participants. In each interview, participants identified moments in their lives revealing a strong instinct for making the world better. Expressed as childhood experiences, social aspects of their for-profit work, volunteerism and board membership, and eventually as nonprofit executives, this value was the orienting direction in their career narratives.

South: Outcomes orientation. While desiring to impact the overall betterment of the world, participants also described themselves as having an outcomes orientation to their work. In Chapter Five, I discuss the tactical, strategic priorities they championed in their nonprofits. In this section, I focus on their work ethic for achieving goals.

All eight participants described long-term organization performance and culture development as a major focus of their leadership. Five participants referenced strategic planning and performance measures as a core part of their approach to work in organizations. Mia drafted a set of strategic initiatives to move the organization forward and presented a progress report to the board as part of her self-evaluation. Reed developed a formal strategic plan for his organization, stemming from the perspective that "even though the outcome of the organization was to be mission driven and to make the world a better place, the way you can exponentially do that is by growing your nonprofit and by utilizing your resources most effectively and efficiently." Dean expressed a similar situation and approach. "I entered a culture where it was

very much about activities, more so than it was about results. I was specifically hired… to put a

results oriented performance framework in place." Benita and Dale described themselves as

specializing in "turnarounds" and also utilized performance goals and metrics to improve

outcomes at their nonprofit organizations.

Shalene, Brad, and Robby explained that their executive directors recruited them

specifically because of their outcomes orientation and skill set. Shalene's role was to manage the

day-to-day affairs of the organization and standardize operations, but the higher purpose was to

promote the long-term sustainability and longevity of the organization:

> [The executive director] actively decided she wanted the program to be bigger than her,
> that she didn't want it to just be [her] program, that she wanted it to stand on its own. We
> have worked towards that…. Feeling like we've achieved that goal, that she feels good of
> whatever happens to her, even if she retired or whatever, that the organization would
> continue on.

Similarly, Brad reported that his executive director hired him as a "culture change agent" to help

with integration and growth, with which he had a demonstrated history of success in his prior

work. The nonprofit had recently merged with another, but they felt both needed an infusion of

innovation to sustain the historic growth of the organization. Brad described the goals

metaphorically using the extended image of an automobile:

> We had some real performance issues…. You buy your car and you're like lets go, and
> then you open up and you're like oh, it's got an engine from 1952 in it that's leaking oil,
> right? The steering doesn't work, crap! That was some crushed dreams right away and it
> took us probably a year and a half or two years just to fix the engine and to plug the oil
> leak and to get new tires on the car. Now, I'd say the last year, we finally got the pedal
> on the gas and we're starting to pick up speed on the innovation side.

The nonprofit CEO that recruited Robby knew what the headhunters that landed him role after

role in the for-profit sector knew: he was good at getting a product to market.

You get a reputation. I was a hit man. My thing was to come in and put a new product strategy together, put a three or four-year program together, and I could run it. That was my thing in a very specialized scientific computing area. When a company was looking to do that, my name was on the short list.

Each of these leaders demonstrated their inclination for driving results through goals and performance measurement. This action-oriented approach to organizational leadership was an asset for the nonprofit roles they crossed sectors to occupy. However, it was still only one dimension of the framework that guided their leadership. An outcomes orientation needs to be matched with the belief that such an approach can be effective in other contexts, including in other sectors. This belief emerged as a third cardinal direction on their internal compasses.

East: Self-efficacy. The concept of self-efficacy is the notion that a person believes in their own ability to affect or influence something. A demonstrated belief of the participants, self-efficacy is fueled by confidence in the value they bring to organizations, regardless of sector. Benita illustrated this concept most clearly when she shared feedback she has received from others that she is really good when she is "in charge." She explained, "I'm not an arrogant person, I've just had a lot of experience." The belief that this experience translates across sectors is an expression of self-efficacy.

Participants demonstrated a high level of confidence in the relevant application of their for-profit experiences and knowledge to a nonprofit context. While acknowledging differences in some aspects of culture and purpose, a common perception among the participants was that running a nonprofit is not much different than running a for-profit. Robby explained his nonprofit CEO had declared they were "going to run this like a business" and noted their foundation had been featured in an article as an organization that was "doing a nonprofit right." Dean observed the compositional overlap between nonprofit board members and corporate leaders in his industry, bolstering his confidence that his experience would be well received.

Mia disclosed that the nonprofit search committee that hired her was just looking for someone with academic credentials, industry knowledge, and generic administrative experience. Shalene had a similar experience in her hiring process.

Self-efficacy also manifested in the perception that nonprofits sometimes need most what for-profit leaders do best. In his advice to other for-profit leaders who may be considering switching sectors, Reed offered, "Whatever you have done in business is going to be needed in the nonprofit sector. Nonprofits need sales, nonprofits need finance, nonprofits need operations people, nonprofits need program development." Other participants echoed this view. Brad noted of his nonprofit, "they don't know about process flows and SOP [standard operating procedure], some of the most basic stuff that my former company would do in marketing or in technology or something else." It is like "you're living in a third world country and you don't know about microwave popcorn. You don't miss it, but you're missing this great thing." Dale also was surprised by the lack of "sophistication" at his nonprofit in its daily operation when he started and was prepared to train and develop business competencies among his staff members.

Confident in the transferability of their work experience across sectors, all participants held an unquestioning belief that they could be effective as nonprofit executives. This expression of self-efficacy is a belief that shaped how they regarded themselves. It also worked in conjunction with a fourth point on the internal compass that made their crossover possible—a willingness to accept lower compensation as they executed their skills across sectors.

West: Meaning over money. Not all crossover leaders are wealthy, mid to late-life career changers who can afford to take a significant salary cut. The participants represented a wide range on the life stage spectrum and all of them discussed the comparatively lower pay associated with their nonprofit roles, relative to what they could make in the private sector. This

value could also be identified as a prioritization of meaningful work over compensation, but it is not a clear formula. It is best described as "openness."

Participants in my study referred to the generally lower nonprofit compensation without prompt during my interviews with them. Shalene and Robby discussed the challenges of lower pay scales in nonprofit organizations. She expressed understanding when staff members at her nonprofit make the decision to leave for higher wages in a for-profit clinic. "Being able to compete with them as far as what they pay and everything, can be a bit of a challenge." Robby cautioned to anyone looking to the nonprofit sector and expecting to make a lot of money, "This isn't going to do it."

Brad openly admitted compensation was a factor in his decision to take the nonprofit position. He spent the first part of his career in the private sector and enjoyed the financial benefits that came with it. The idea of working at a nonprofit where "I have to buy my own pencils" was not going to be an attraction. "I'm risk averse. If the draw was anything smaller, it wouldn't have been as appealing." Dean, however, to the surprise of many of his corporate peers, accepted a 50% cut in pay when he left his corporate role to become a nonprofit director. He acknowledged it came with some "fear and trepidation" economically, but the cause was compelling. "Not that I was taking an oath of poverty. I was still gonna be ok." Dean turned down a couple of other lucrative offers before accepting the nonprofit role, because he doubted they would fill the void he felt on the corporate career path: "Bigger, more impressive, more money, whatever the case might be… I didn't feel it was gonna necessarily be the answer to that process of discernment that I had been looking for." It was a decision made "as much with my heart as my head."

Some participants were at a stage of life and had financial resources that made the transition easier. Closer to retirement than the rest of the participants, Dale reflected, "My money situation was I made a ton, but I lost a ton during all that. Once again, it never bothered me. I've always thought money didn't matter. But you don't know until you lose most of it." Dale disclosed he "still commands a high salary by nonprofit standards," but expressed that he "never was motivated by money."

Benita admitted "the financial gains you can make, you can't get that in the nonprofit world." However, making more and more money was not her focus:

> That didn't matter to me because I kind of got to a point where I was like, I don't know how much money I actually need. I mean I'm not the kind of person who's kind of, "Okay, I have it. Now I need more and more and more." I'm very comfortable in life, and to be honest, I live relatively simply in my life, and that's my own choice.

Reed shared this his peers and friends generally understood his decision to move to the lower-paying nonprofit sector. The most surprise came from some of his colleagues in his MBA program, who reminded him, "This is not going to be a career path where you're going to be making a million, two million, three million dollars a year. We're all along that path so why in the hell are you making this decision?" Citing the time and money he was investing in a degree that could open the door to higher and higher compensation, they advised him that he was "basically throwing the return on investment out through the window." Reed reported responding to them by saying, "Return on investment is measured in lots of different ways."

The overall sentiment of the participants was that their work was not about the money. According to Brad, working in the nonprofit sector means giving up wealth generating options (i.e., stock gifts, bonuses, etc.) that would have been part of his compensation package if he had stayed. For Brad and his family, it was hard "to think about cutting back on some of the extras, but not enough to stop from this kind of great potential."

Ordinal Directions

The points on a compass are further subdivided into a set of ordinal directions bisecting the cardinal directions. Different from the directional compass, these points on the crossover leaders' internal compass do not always fall between the cardinal points conceptually. However, as much as possible, I positioned them on points of the compass to depict the nuances of the beliefs, ethics, and value-based framework the participants described.

Northwest: Work relationships. Healthy work relationships and partnerships was a strong theme among most participants in the study. Having positive relationships at work is often an indictor of employee productivity. As a point on the internal compass of the participants, it also sits as a conceptual balance between the motivating true north of positive social impact and the sacrifice of lower nonprofit compensation.

For some, like Robby, Benita, and Brad, these relationships were fundamental to their crossover experience, as they trusted the invitations of those who recruited them to the nonprofit that crossing sectors would work out. For others, the work relationships and authentic connections had to form over time, but were essential criteria for how they defined for themselves what successful acclimation and effectiveness in the organization looked like. When he first started at the nonprofit, Dean expressed a sense of social alienation from some of his coworkers. "I felt a little out of my element. I didn't feel like there were people who were like me, the same way I did when I was in the private sector." He shared at times he felt like they spoke different languages and found it harder to build relationships that were going to become friendships. That experience improved over time, though he still reported awareness of the different subcultures among "people that had grown up through social services and people that had come from industry."

Reed was very purposeful in his workplace conduct and choice of workspace to develop work relationships, subscribing to a philosophy of "management by walking around" and even determining not to have a separate office, instead using drop-in desks like the rest of his staff. "They were excited that the CEO actually paid an interest in what they were doing," which helped differentiate him from his predecessor.

Shalene referred to a popular business book that described the ideal pairing of work partners as visionaries and integrators. "We are classic: my boss is a visionary, I'm a integrator." That mutual understanding has allowed them to have good communication and balance in the strengths they bring to the organization:

> I think I'm one of the only people who have ever like told her no, when she wanted to do [something]…. She tends to be the visionary, I'm the details person, so I might have to go back and say, "I've looked at the details and this is not going to work, or at least not in this time frame." At the same time we've been able to move very quickly when we did see a need that needed to be filled that we felt like we could fill.

Benita identified a similarly significant partnership with her chief financial officer (CFO). "We have a phenomenal CFO here. He and I are very complementary in our skills, our strengths, and our weaknesses," adding that in their effort to improve the financial sustainability of the organization "we got a lot of credibility as a partnership."

Work relationships take on many forms. Whether friendships, one-on-one partnerships, or team norms, participants described relationships at work as an essential component of their belief system for evaluating satisfaction and success in their transition to nonprofits. However, workplace relationships were not the only connections valued by the participants.

Southeast: Family. Several participants talked about how their families perceived their work and how work impacted their families. I placed this theme between the cardinal directions of self-efficacy and outcomes orientation as a balancing point to nuance the work oriented values

of effectiveness and impact. Married or single, with or without children of their own, participants referenced family as a factor in decisions related to their career pathway stories.

In some cases, family perception and impact of work was positive. Benita reported her international travel and work helped form awareness of the wider world for her children. Shalene and Mia were able to align their work toward a meaningful cause with proximity to family. Brad's epiphany to follow his dreams instead of remaining in a secure job occurred on an overnight retreat with his daughter.

Other participants spoke of the negative impacts of their careers on life at home. Dale described how the time demands of his earlier career strained his marriage and family. He reported the 70-hour workweeks contributing to "losing my family." Dean reached what he considered to be the height of the corporate ladder only to find it left him feeling joyless:

> I remember the day that I got the promotion to the lead marketing job for [the business unit], and I came home, and I was talking to my wife about it. There just wasn't much happiness for me necessarily, and she certainly wasn't excited about it. It sort of felt like, it seems like it's just taking you further and further in the wrong direction. Most people would have been over the moon about that.

He shared there also was tension in his marriage. With two kids and increasing work demands, he knew he had to make a decision:

> I'm gonna make a choice here about what I want my life to be like, and that includes a happy marriage, and family, and even if that means me taking some significant personal risk in my career, that's worth it, much more worth it than taking significant risk in my marriage and family life.

The value of family relationships was a strong theme in participants' career pathway stories. Some found benefits for family while working at a nonprofit, while others intentionally shifted sectors in the hope of establishing healthier work-life balance to retain their families. Conscious or not, the value of family played a role in the participants' career decisions.

Northeast: New experiences. Several participants expressed the value of new experiences, new applications of current knowledge, and new perspectives. The value is related to a spirit of adventure as well as a natural curiosity of the world and how it works. I placed it between the cardinal directions of positive social impact and self-efficacy to illustrate its connection with a socially informed entrepreneurialism that emerged as a theme among participants.

Dale exhibited this value both in his personal life as well as in his professional life. "I've never gone on vacation to the same place twice. Everything about me is new learning, new growth. That's my personal thing." More than a personal thing, the quest for something new was a driver throughout Dale's career development, whether it was learning from the "immense change" of the technology industry early in his career or a series of "six different, fascinating jobs" in financial markets. Undergirding his quest for something new is Dale's perspective that "we're on this earth to grow… and so with me these new causes, these new opportunities give me this tremendous growth opportunity." His decision to cross over to the nonprofit sector followed the same logic and it is the same reason why he already told the board that he will not finish out his career there. "It all goes back to my drive for growing my spirit and having as many experiences in life as I can."

Benita described herself as "a bit of an adventurer" and not one to stay in the same organization for a long time. Trained as a researcher and as a scientist, advice to try different career paths matched her natural curiosity about the world. Her reaction to the opportunity to work in a nonprofit was intrigue, "Wow, that's really super interesting. I should look at this thing."

After already working in a nonprofit once in his career, Robby initially balked at an opportunity to return to the sector, commenting, "I did that already." He said the chief executive officer (CEO) explained the foundation was poised to take commercial software to the next level with an open source platform for the development of precision medicines. "So I thought, well, let's try it for a while and see where it goes."

Similarly, Brad leveraged work networks and new opportunities to gain experiences throughout his career progression, strategically bypassing an MBA. He described his current nonprofit role as essentially chief marketing officer, but noted, "I've never even taken a marketing class." Countering his self-disclosed "contentment gene," which could keep him satisfied at any point in his career, living "without regrets" kept him open to whatever was next.

The drive for novelty was a prominent theme for some participants in their career pathway stories. Often described as "opportunity," a preference for new experiences in career development was part of what brought some leaders to their nonprofit positions. For these participants, curiosity of "what was next" or for "what could be" is part of the crossover experience.

Southwest: Integrity. This final point on the internal compass incorporates the ethical concepts of honesty and "doing the right thing." It also includes the value of being true to oneself, as another definition of integrity means being whole and undivided. I placed it between the cardinal directions of willingness to work for less money and outcomes orientation as a placeholder to ground what participants said they were willing to do and desired to achieve.

Mia said she enjoyed her first job out of college and might have stayed longer if ethical issues had not become apparent. Part of her concern stemmed from a consulting model that derived profit from client dependency, but she had other concerns about the overall governance

of the firm as well. For Mia, "doing the right thing," meant leaving the firm in search of a work environment that better aligned with her ethical moorings. For Dale, it meant not fearing the judgment of others when he decided he needed to recalibrate his work-life balance, which "truncated" his career. He found his peers to actually be supportive and from then on decided being motivated by fear was "a fool's errand." This experience enabled him to walk into any situation and "make the right calls, do the right thing, whatever the repercussions."

For Reed, being true to himself meant not losing his heart in his work. He recounted a moment earlier in his career as a consultant when, despite working nearly 24-hour shifts and warning of falling behind, a project was not going to meet deadline and his bosses were going "to throw him under the bus" to protect their relationship with the client. He concluded, "I'm losing my heart in my work. I'm not connecting my heart to what I do everyday and I need to change that."

For Benita, the value of integrity also meant not feeling the need to pretend to be something she was not, even if it meant admitting a lack of knowledge or experience that others might expect them to have as part of her role. In her first nonprofit executive role, even as she contributed where she could, she was advised to pull back and learn. "I knew nothing about the military, I knew nothing about government contracting. I knew nothing about how to work with the FDA or whatever, so I was listening and learning." That approach "helped me to be kind of accepted by that group."

Integrity was a pronounced determiner of career pathway direction. Participants described a sense of wholeness and moral rightness in their nonprofit roles, without implying a morally superior status of nonprofits. Participants sought careers that felt more aligned with their personal sense of ethics at work and understanding of what was most authentic for them.

Summary

I told "crossover" stories based on participant views about their motivation to serve in the nonprofit sector. Centered on their motivation for career change and eventually crossing sectors, two primary themes emerged. The first was a conscious awareness of mission. Some participants discovered their mission early on in their career pathways, guiding their choices and decisions. Others located their mission as they continued to follow their career pathway. Beliefs, ethics, and values served as a guiding force for the participants in their evolving and established careers. Conceptualized as eight points on a compass (positive social impact, outcomes orientation, self-efficacy, meaning over money, work relationships, family, new experiences, and integrity) these concepts oriented the participants as they moved from for-profit work to the nonprofit sector. In the next chapter, I describe the participants' initial experience in the nonprofit sector and the strategic priorities they initiated as part of their executive tenure.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CROSSOVER EXPERIENCE

My study of crossover leaders began with an investigation of their career pathways to the nonprofit sector. In order to get a fuller perspective of the crossover experience, I also explored what they encountered in the nonprofit organizations they were hired to lead. In this chapter, I describe their initial experiences in the non-profit sector and the organizational changes they championed.

I began the second portion of the interviews by asking participants to talk about their first year at the nonprofit. For some, this involved thinking back several years to reconstruct that initial experience. Other participants were only a few years into their nonprofit leadership experience and more readily recalled what those first days looked like. Despite having just outlined their complex work histories and motivation to work in the nonprofit sector, participants frequently described their initial experiences working at a nonprofit in terms related to culture shock. One participant noted, at first, it was as if he and his nonprofit coworkers spoke "different languages." The participants varied in their preparedness for culture change, which emerged as a theme related to their posture as they entered the nonprofit sector.

Organizational change was the second theme to emerge from the data. I asked questions about their initial leadership priorities and initiatives. Participants shared observations of the state of the organization when they started and delineated strategic initiatives they championed to bring about transformative change. This second theme was consistent across all interviews. After their entry posture helped transition them through a period of acclimation, the participants sought to substantively change their organizations in accordance with their prior experience and knowledge from work in the for-profit sector, as well as their educational background in business-related fields.

Initial Experience: Entry Posture

Any new experience can trigger a process of adjustment of varying intensity depending on the amount of change required and the openness of participants to adapt to a new environment. Crossing sectors is no exception and the participants in my study experienced periods of adjustment as they settled into their nonprofit roles. Some adjusted quickly, some were initially caught off-guard and then adjusted, and others stood firm and changed their environments to fit them. I begin this section by describing their experiences as "entry posture," which I define as the approach taken during the period of adjustment.

Much like stepping outside into extreme weather conditions, encounters with new work conditions can be met with anticipation or sudden shock. How consciously a person enters into those conditions can determine their "entry posture"—adapting for the change, getting caught off-guard, or bracing for whatever comes. The participants told different stories of their first experiences working in the nonprofit sector, revealing differing entry postures. I organized their experiences into three categories — "prepared to adapt," "caught off-guard," and "stood firm" — describing individual nuances for each participant beyond this basic breakdown as supporting data.

Prepared to Adapt

Three participants appeared more prepared to change as they crossed sectors than their counterparts. Two of the three — Robby and Benita — were on their second nonprofit position when I interviewed them, but I primarily placed them in this category based on their description of their first nonprofit experiences, using their second experience to supplement my decision. These three participants — all initially trained as scientists — adopted "learning" or "flexible" entry postures as they crossed sectors, allowing them to readily adapt to the new encounters.

In her response to my interview question on how she arrived at a nonprofit, the first comment Benita made was that she "was trained as a researcher." She went on to explain how she had been advised early in her career to "try out different things" and she took that advice to heart, describing herself as "a little bit of an adventurer." Whether or not it was the combination of her training in scientific method and her adventurous spirit or other factors, Benita entered situations with a natural curiosity and then sought to make sense of it along the way—as she did when encountering her first opportunity to work in a nonprofit. "The recruiter ended up plopping this opportunity with [the nonprofit] in my lap. I looked at it and I thought, 'Wow, that's really super interesting. I should look at this thing.'" She owned her lack of knowledge about nonprofits and determined "to figure out how I fit in." To do this, she "had to kind of listen and take cues from other people." One of those people was the CEO, who gave her posture-setting advice as she started out: "I want you just to kind of lean back a bit and listen a lot and just kind of feel the place out." This entry posture, matched with being "lucky" and identifying "low hanging fruit" she could focus on, built "credibility." This led to what she considered to be a successful first experience at the nonprofit.

She maintained that same learning posture as she approached her next experience in a much smaller and different kind of nonprofit. "I was more curious about what [the organization] was. I had no clue that there was something called an association industry, so I came to the job. I'm embarrassed to even admit that." Her transition into a second nonprofit was not without challenge, but Benita's openness to learning and advice from other again set her on a path of discovery. In a conversation with another leader from another association about a plan she wanted to enact, she was told, "Oh, that won't work" because she was overlooking how associations operated. She resolved to learn more and adjusted her plan. "I'm a pretty quick

study and I'm also aware of my strengths and weaknesses. I think because I took time to reach

out and consult and share and so on, I think I got going pretty quickly here."

Like Benita, Robby's preparedness for working in a nonprofit came from his early

training. Robby also was trained as a researcher, but he recalled an even earlier experience that

shaped his career path: being in one of the first groups at the high school level to use a

computer—"literally punch cards and the whole thing." His whole career has been about "how

you use computing as part of the scientific process." He completed a doctorate in his field and

progressed through a series of jobs that varied from large government institutions to a small

startup company. When presented with an opportunity to work at his first nonprofit, he found

close alignment in the role with his specialization in product development and little difference in

workplace culture because of the size of the organization. He described the only difference

between that particular nonprofit and the corporations he had worked for as not having to pay

taxes, "which is what being non-for-profit means." This similarity between for-profit and

nonprofit experience allowed Robby to cross over fairly smoothly.

Robby returned to the for-profit sector, but it was not long before he was recruited back

to a second nonprofit. He was initially dismissive, "A nonprofit? I did that already." However,

the fact that this nonprofit, as an open source product format, was something entirely different,

peaked his curiosity enough to "try it for a while and see how it goes." As with his first

nonprofit experience, the organization still largely operated "like a business," so the threshold of

change was relatively low and required less adjustment. Nonetheless, Robby entered as someone

prepared for whatever minor changes were required.

As with Robby, Shalene did not anticipate much difference between her for-profit work

experience and what she encountered at the nonprofit. Her initial educational path started in the

sciences, but she pivoted careers with her MBA and some job experience in marketing. She was mostly looking for a marketing job, but was introduced to a nonprofit executive director seeking a director of operations to take over the administrative side of the clinic because it was "too much for one person." Shalene accepted the role eagerly, but admitted that it took a long time for the staff to fully recognize her role in the organization and that the director also had a hard time letting go of control of operations. Attuned to relational dynamics in the workplace, Shalene determined she "didn't want to push too hard" because the director "didn't have the trust with me yet. She wasn't just going to turn the team over." While they "probably could have gotten there sooner," Shalene also recognized that she needed to build credibility with the organization.

> You know how it is. You've got to build up some trust so that your first screw up is okay. Because you don't want to have your first screw up and them be like, "Oh no, she's terrible at this." Versus if you have a lot of goodwill in there, your first screw up everyone's like, "Oh okay, everybody screws up sometimes." We took awhile to get there.

Her posture of adaptation, especially to the human side of change her coworkers were experiencing, allowed Shalene to successfully integrate into her nonprofit work culture and practice.

Assuming an adaptive entry posture allowed Benita, Robby, and Shalene to avoid significant confrontations and mistakes as they acclimated to their nonprofit environments. Robby and Benita also used this posture in their second nonprofit experiences, which still required learning and adaptation. The next set of participants also adapted, but did so primarily after encountering resistance from their nonprofit coworkers and gaining greater perspective on their environments.

Caught Off-Guard

Three other participants experienced some unexpected turbulence as they crossed sectors, but then adapted to their new environments. Two of them, Brad and Dean, were still at their first nonprofit when interviewed; the third, Mia, was on her second nonprofit role. I placed Mia in this category because of her first nonprofit experience, though her second experience better reflected the previous category, "Prepared to Adapt."

Brad came to his nonprofit "guns-a-blazing," ready to innovate and implement changes in how they did marketing. However, it did not take long for him to realize that this approach was not going to work. First came the realization that many technology systems were outdated and operational processes were underdeveloped. That alone caused his ambitions to grind to a "screeching halt." He also encountered a lot of resistance. The chief operating officer (COO) disagreed with him about introducing the "science" of marketing to determine pricing and to drive strategy. Brad admitted he probably pushed too hard and stepped too far into his territory after the COO confronted him, "hardcore, and probably rightly so." He apologized. Reflecting on the situation, he commented, "Would I do it differently, probably, but it was so effective."

He was prepared for resistance and even had a theory about it. During the interview, he drew a curved line that dipped below a y-axis before bending back up above the axis to depict how he anticipates resistance, whether from an individual or a group. He partially attributed resistance as a reaction to his loud personality, intimidating physical characteristics, and propensity for workplace antics. However, he also acknowledged perceived skepticism from the long-time nonprofit staff because of his business background. "You don't have [nonprofit] experience. You're coming in as a marketing guy and you sound like a sales guy, and you're doing stupid stuff… or making mistakes." Then, true to his model, "they come back."

Ultimately, he believes his approach wins people over. His conclusion on the matter is, "I can't change who I am," though he has adapted his style somewhat with increasing levels of responsibility over diverse teams.

Dean admitted he came across as "fairly corporate" and as a "top-down thinker." Some of his ideas were challenged, not because they were bad, but because they were not developed collaboratively with stakeholders. "I got a little bit of a wakeup call that I need to do things differently." He admitted there was a learning process where he had to figure out how to influence through direct engagement in developing solutions and to be more transparent in decision-making. "That was a bit of an epiphany for me."

Mia left the for-profit sector for a nonprofit organization under the assumption that it would operate under a different set of principles and values. Profit-driven decisions and a consulting model that fostered client dependency to ensure sustained business revenue left her jaded. She wanted a more ethical work environment. Her first nonprofit role was director of operations for the enrollment office at a university. She quickly became disillusioned when she realized that rather than admitting students based solely on merit, she had to "model a class based on what we needed to bring in, in terms of tuition dollars," which to her meant that the "admission process is not pure." That realization, coupled with the political jockeying she witnessed for senior roles, ended her idealism. "I think part of it was just being young and dumb quite honestly…. Any organization that you're working for still needs to stay solvent." This tough lesson on the reality of organizational finance shaped her perspective and better prepared her for the role she now occupies as executive director of a nonprofit association.

> Of course it set me up for where I am now. I am just pulling together our preliminary first quarter financials for the association. It makes me feel good that we've got a little bit of a surplus right now.

Another lesson Mia applied in her executive director role was to plan for change. She was committed to managing the transition from the former director well and insisted on having a full year of overlap with him as he finished out his term. This approach allowed her to walk through a full calendar year of programming together, knowing that there would be little documentation of the work otherwise. She outlined her plan: the first year was for learning; in the second year she made recommendations to the board in the form of articulated strategic initiatives based on what she observed during her first year; the third year was focused on implementation and measurement of impact. Now at the start of her fourth year, she has a solid grasp on overall operations and what effective leadership looks like.

These three participants described being somewhat caught off-guard by their initial nonprofit experiences. Anticipating a smoother transition, they encountered resistance and learning moments that repositioned their approaches. In the end, they adapted and found success in the changes they wanted to initiate. While these first two groups — initially or eventually — adapted to their environments, the third group of participants described a more resolute entry posture that resulted in changes to their environments.

Stood Firm

Two other participants took on a very different entry posture. Rather than entering their nonprofit experience with an adaptive mindset of flexibility or learning the hard lessons and re-posturing for better success, Reed and Dale stood firm in what they knew needed to happen and waited for their organizations to adapt to them. The end result from their perspective was still positive organizational change, but how they got there looked dramatically different than the entry postures taken by the other participants.

Dale's nonprofit also had recently merged before he came on as CEO. Among his initial questions to learn about the organization, he asked about how they were attending to the culture change and was disappointed to learn it had not been a conscious effort and was yielding negative results:

> And then I said, "How are we doing with combined cultures?" They said, "We don't like them and they don't like us." Then I came to find out that ops didn't like web development, web development didn't like ops, finance didn't like either, and they all hated HR. So no work was done there.

Dale approached managing the culture change by instituting new staff performance standards and expectations. "I had some very serious conversations around what needed to happen." While it also resulted in significant turnover, Dale found great "joy" in seeing the effect of the culture change on the development of his staff teams and their execution toward the mission.

> [It's] been amazing to see what it can do for the cause, but also to see these employees, how much they've grown and how much they've come to enjoy the way they're doing this, particularly when it comes to cross-functional work, cross-functional communications, project management, teamwork, values driven work. That's been very exciting.

Reed followed a similar approach to culture change in his nonprofit. Under previous leadership, the organization developed a "random" titling structure and pay scale, which resulted in confusion and discontent among the employees. He decided to address the situation directly, not only by initiating a structural redesign, but also by "defining the high performance culture that I wanted to establish for the organization, and really define what I meant by that to the entire team in the organization as a whole." As with Dale's organization, this approach eventually resulted in a substantial reconstitution of the staff team and yielded a more unified team aligned with the new culture.

Dale and Reed's entry posture was to take stock of their surroundings and then stand firm in what they knew needed to take place to move the organizations ahead. They both initiated

these changes within the first six months of their tenures. The result was significant change in the composition and structure of their nonprofits. In the next section, I describe with more detail the staffing changes brought about by their approach, which is part of a larger, second theme of organizational change instituted by the participants.

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Organizational Change

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Dale and Benita both identified themselves as specialists in "turnarounds," which are organizations in need of and being targeted for change. Brad also described himself as a leader with a competency for transforming organizations to become more efficient and culturally unified. All three were brought on with the explicit instruction by their boards or CEO to change the direction of the organization. While not instructed to do so, the other five participants initiated substantive organizational change within the first one to two years of their executive leadership at their nonprofit organizations. In this section, I first present common clusters of changes the participants enacted in the broad category of strategic priorities and then focus more specifically on targeted personnel changes participants instituted in varying degrees.

Strategic Priorities

Strategic priorities are initiatives undertaken to affect whole-scale change through focused action on key aspects of the design and operation of an organization. These priorities may be embedded in formally crafted strategic plans, but also may be informal ideas that people emphasize through their leadership. Reed, Benita, and Mia referenced using some form of written strategic plan to advance change initiatives, but all participants had ready answers when asked about what strategic priorities they established for their nonprofits.

Marketing. The overall importance of marketing as a strategic priority was underscored by the fact that all eight referenced marketing multiple times throughout their interviews. Hiring

of marketing personnel or expanding marketing capacity also came up frequently as an urgent need for organizational improvements among the participants.

Brad serves as the chief experience officer (CXO), which was a new position developed by the CEO to help the nonprofit rethink its marketing presence across multiple business areas. In many for-profits, marketing is "the center of the universe," driving research and development, manufacturing, as well as sales and finance. Before he was hired at his nonprofit, it was just the opposite. Brad said the organization was designed in such a way that "ops [operations] does everything." Marketing was more of a functional communications role. "It's printing posters." Brad's priority was to catch up the rest of the organization on marketing competencies. He hired new staff with marketing backgrounds, eventually merging marketing and sales, resulting in a massive expansion of the role of marketing in the organization. Marketing now determines pricing and drives strategy. "It's been a long, slow path to get [operations] to see the value we are bringing, but it's happening now." When operations wanted to re-launch a program the traditional way things were done at the organization, the revamped marketing team was able to contribute essential information, like customer identification, product differentiation, pricing, which built trust and respect between the divisions and ultimately benefitted the whole organization.

Early on, Shalene advocated for the board "to invest more in marketing" by hiring a dedicated marketing position. She noted the pattern, "which you are always going to see in nonprofits," was for staff to take on multiple responsibilities, regardless of their skill sets. That was the case for how the organization had been approaching its marketing function and she wanted to change that approach. Soon after she started at the nonprofit, it was a top priority.

A marketing role was also Mia's first hire, which set a precedent for hiring based on strategic organizational need instead what she described as her predecessor's approach of hiring based on relational connection. She recalled, "We need somebody who is trained well in marketing and communications because nobody on staff is." While she also reported the need for additional program staff, the marketing position had to come first because part of the strategic initiatives she outlined "is to connect more and engage more with the early career and mid career members to understand what it is they're looking for in terms of this association membership." In order for organizational need to drive development, strategic marketing and communications had to come first.

Benita created a marketing position on her executive team. She noted with emphasis, "There were people who had titles that were like marketing and membership and all that. They were absolutely not marketing and membership people. They were not." Prior to hiring that position, there was no skill for membership profiling or segmentation, which made it difficult for members of the membership to effectively carry out their responsibilities. Benita added that hiring the marketing person was the "best decision I ever made."

The CEO that brought Robby to the nonprofit did so because of his expertise in delivering a product to market. Marketing became his first focus and he began by building the communications infrastructure. "The stuff we had was clunky and not very informative." There were pieces in place, "but without any direction you don't get things very fast or very far." The CEO gave Robby free reign and modest resources to move marketing ahead, but he had to be "excruciatingly efficient" with the limited resources available at that stage of development in the organization, which he described as being in its infancy. "Recruiting a team that could execute development and build brand was essential."

The other three participants also assigned priority to marketing. In the organizational restructure he instituted, Reed created an entire functional unit for marketing communications, which previously had not existed. Dean hired additional staff with corporate marketing backgrounds to support their work in social media marketing and to assist with fundraising and communications with corporate sponsors. Dale "got rid of my communications group and brought in a marketing group" to bring greater "sophistication" to their communications, allowing them to do data and market segmentation. Pleased with what they were doing for the organization, he summed up their work as "fascinating stuff."

Of all the strategic priorities the participants described, marketing was the most prevalent. Regardless the size of the organization, they all made sure qualified marketing personnel were added to the roster or at least differentiated the role of marketing from communications as part of building organizational capacity and competency. Closely related to marketing, technology was another strategic priority several participants emphasized during their interviews.

Technological improvements. There was a clear connection among the participants between technology and marketing in the modern organizational landscape. Technology and marketing was central to Robby's role in the organization. However, other participants also highlighted the importance of technical innovation and the need for upgrading the technology that supports the organization and its programs. Technology innovation and upgrade priorities included web-based services to improve user experience as well as technologies that increased operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Mia genuinely regarded the long-term loyalty of some of her older staff as a true asset, but also found it could be an obstacle to innovation. One of the younger members of the team, she recognized the disconnect between the immediate service she experienced with online

purchases and the user interface provided by their organization, which could take up to two weeks to process requests. The staff members, who are largely older, defended the system as the norm and she struggled to get them to understand. Beyond user experience, the state of their web technologies also left them vulnerable to data access workarounds that would negate the value of membership. In her second year, she initiated a website overhaul with greater security and that optimized user experience.

As Dale explored evidence of his organization's impact, he was dismayed to find they were not using data analytics to align the distribution of services in areas where it was needed most. He introduced the concept of geographic information systems (GIS) to the organization and said, "We're going to take all this data and put it on maps." Within three months, he hired a geospatial analyst and "I had these gorgeous, color coded maps for 29 counties and five cities. I went through three iterations of sophistication. Now I've probably got the best in [the state]."

As a marketing officer, Brad understood the importance of staying ahead of the technology curve, but what his nonprofit had in place was far behind. "It was archaic, it was horrible; you couldn't do anything on your phone. It was a deficit. You could see a day where we became irrelevant, people were like 'I can't do business with them.'" Fortunately for Brad, at about the same time as he started, the CEO hired a chief digital officer to advance transformational change in the customer digital experience, including mobile apps as well as other web-based service innovations. "The idea is that the combination of the two of us can drive this innovation wave, with technology being kind of the tip of the spear."

Many organizations strive to keep up with the digital revolution. User experience, data analytics, and mobile technology are part of that wider effort and some participants prioritized it

at their nonprofits. However, not all organizations required development in this kind of technical infrastructure. Nonetheless, as a close companion of marketing, it was a priority worth noting.

Board/governance transformation. Participants generally described positive relationships with their boards. They found them to be supportive of their vision and direction for the organization. Interestingly, in some cases, the board itself became a subject of the strategic changes the leaders wanted to prioritize.

Benita had a lot of prior board experience and "knew what a good board looked like, which I think was something very different than what this organization had had before." In her estimation, the board was oversized and "was way down in the details." Within the first six to nine months, she strategically shifted their focus through an initiative on excellence in board governance. Over the course of a few years, this resulted in a complete overhaul of board size, composition, by-laws, operations, and plan for member succession. The board is now "a very different board today than the board that I joined under."

Similarly, Reed targeted board transformation as one of his strategic priorities. "We started changing the responsibility between board and staff and the governance structure significantly." Before his tenure, the board primarily owned the strategic planning process, "to the point that they were doing two and three day retreats and actually writing the strategy for the organization" even though "they aren't even informed enough to provide that whole strategic framework where their industry is going." He augmented the board with additional industry experts during the strategic planning process and then opened it up so that the staff members, who have greater industry expertise, "build out the metrics, and the levels of success, and then bring it back to the board for a vote." In this way, the board now is set up to provide "strategic direction" and does not get as involved in running the day-to-day operations of the organization.

According to Benita and Reed, board members welcomed the governance changes they made to their boards, which looked to them for their expertise and direction setting abilities. This strategic priority was just one component of larger plans participants had to transform their organizations. Other participants focused on the internal operations of their organizations.

Operational excellence. Several participants described the condition of operations when they started at their nonprofits in need of significant improvement. Consequently, elements of operational excellence became top priorities for them. Supply chain, process documentation, financial records, human resource practices, and quality standards were frequently cited participant priorities.

Dale started at his nonprofit with the expectation that it "wouldn't be as sophisticated as a for-profit" but was still "surprised at the lack of sophistication for an organization as large" as it was. He elaborated, "A $45 million budget and, no kidding, the CFO was doing our finances on six levels of spreadsheets. Shocking." While getting oriented to the organization, he asked about human resource functions, like performance management practices and employee engagement surveys, as well as operational functions, including process engineering and channel management, and found the systems to be sub-standard or that the staff did not even know what he was talking about:

> These are the questions that a guy like me, who's dabbled in literally every part of a corporate business, would ask. I wasn't surprised they didn't have all the answers. I was surprised at their ignorance over any business practices and principles.

In order to address these strategic issues, Dale prioritized training and development of those who were willing to learn and opened the door for turnover of employees that were not on board with the strategic changes.

While a much smaller organization than Dale's, Mia correctly anticipated a lack of process and program documentation at her nonprofit, which she inherited from its founding executive director after over 30 years of service. "If you're going to be the only executive director of the association, how much documentation do you really need to do your job?" Mia also recognized that the state of operations had to do with the stage of development of the organization. "A lot of time and energy was spent into building this association into what it was when I first came in three years ago. That was one of the reasons why some of the operational efficiencies just weren't there." Another reason she cited related to historic hiring practices. Documentation of processes and programs was part of the "running list of things that I thought could be improved upon."

Before becoming president, Dean's first role at his nonprofit was director of operations and wanted to increase safety standards among their member associations by changing the terms of the membership contract. "It can be fairly contentious. It's like, here's the 80 pages of things you got to do to remain a member in good standing." Rather than instituting the changes as a top-down initiative, Dean collaborated with partner members to rewrite the contract in a transparent process that build ownership and buy-in. It was "a big investment of time and energy, and in some cases, money," but was part of a plan to improve operations standards that ultimately transformed the organization:

> Fundamentally, I feel like we went from an entrepreneurial organization with an antagonistic membership relationship to a really large scale, professionally managed organization that's far more strategic, with a much more collaborative relationship with our members. I take personal pride in that transformation because I feel like I was at the center of it.

Improvements to organizational practices and processes are one aspect of the internal focus participants instituted at their nonprofit organizations. Some changes were a matter of

training and development or collaborative redesign of systems and standards. Other changes required additional support and strategic prioritization.

Financial stability. Most nonprofits depend on corporate, foundation, and individual financial contributions or grants to fund their programs and services, though some also have income-generating resources. In most nonprofits, the CEO or executive director serves as the primary "face" of the organization in fund development, if not actually the primary source of major giving initiatives. Given this situation, it is not surprising that some participants described financial stability as a strategic priority of their leadership at their nonprofit.

Before even fully understanding what being a nonprofit executive entailed, Benita was aware that fund development was a key part of the job. As she started her first nonprofit executive role, she told the CEO, "I'm going to [raise] as much money as I can, and what you choose to do with it is up to you." Almost a decade later and in her second nonprofit executive role, Benita understood clearly the financial responsibilities of her role. In fact, she described the situation as requiring a "financial turnaround" involving benchmarking with other comparable organizations and scaling back on expenses that were clearly out of line. Altogether, it was a more frugal approach to operations expenditures, which over time changed the organizational culture from one of presumed excess to strategic investment.

Robby explained that the stability of the financial base is always a concern. Part of his hesitation in coming to his second nonprofit was its open source business model, which ran counter to his past for-profit experience — and even counter to his previous nonprofit experience — which leveraged revenue-generating operations to fund much of the programming. Robby and some others at his current organization are open to innovative funding sources, including "a for-profit arm" that could help generate sustainable revenue. In many other ways, they are

building the nonprofit around a for-profit model. "We're putting a business view on running a not-for-profit foundation," which he believed could position them well in the future to achieve their mission.

Fundraising and revenue generation are essential to nonprofits. Consequently, it was not surprising for financial stability to emerge as a common strategic priority. While it only was a pronounced concern for two of the eight participants, other participants (Dale, Dean, and Brad) referred to revenue and fundraising, but in more positive terms, as their organizations already seemed to be performing well in this area or had improved as result of other strategic priorities.

Performance measurement. Data-driven decision-making, performance goals, and metrics or indicators to measure progress are all aspects of performance measurement systems in organizations. Originating in the for-profit sector, performance measurement increasingly is becoming established practice in the nonprofit and public sectors. Several participants in my study identified data and performance measurement as a key priority to develop in the nonprofits they served. In most cases, this approach to organizational leadership was new for their nonprofits and participants frequently reported initial resistance to the concept.

Dean's role was to institute a performance measurement system that would drive results-based decision-making and establish measureable outcomes. Though he had the support of the board and the executive director, not everyone in the organization was on board with that plan. Dean recalled early on serving on a cross-functional team making recommendations on how to address core facets of a particular social issue the organization was trying to mitigate. During an "ideation session" with other staff, he made the observation that their focus was more on output than outcome and had "no strategic discipline to it." He then pointed out that their approach was "fundamentally flawed" because it did not allow them to make "strategic choices to maximize

impact." Several people on the team "looked at me like I was speaking another language." A performance management approach is now part of the norm at his organization.

Reed's first nonprofit experience was with a foundation as their director of strategic planning and measurement. In that role, he was "doing business work, setting performance metrics, doing analysis of programs and initiatives that we had in their impact, and using a strategic planning process to create new strategies, and new ways of attacking the issues" and "essentially really measuring whether or not we were being successful in the work that we were doing." When he moved into his nonprofit executive role, he brought that skill set with him and found a mixed reaction from his staff as they adjusted to metrics-based organizational strategy:

> Most of the staff initially loved it because they heard about frameworks and things that they had never heard about before. But when you started taking away some of the relationship decision-making and moving it more towards actual analytical decision-making — of which relationship could be a part, but you still had to back the relationship with analytics — that's when you started seeing some people come up and start complaining, "I don't know if I like this so much because you're taking the ability for me to make decisions based upon relationships, or my feelings, or my gut out of the equation." I was like, "No, you can still do that. You just have to back it with some information that helps support this."

Similarly, prior to Dale's tenure there was no system in place to determine how many people were receiving services compared to those who needed services. In addition to the GIS data Dale introduced at this nonprofit, he initiated a formal data collection process for measuring client services that would drive decision-making and strategy. "The data will tell us that. They didn't know any of that."

Mia encountered data deficiency at her second nonprofit as well as a mentality that presumed they knew what association members needed and wanted, which she characterized as, "This is how we do it, so the members must need it." She challenged that mentality and created an initiative to reach out to younger and mid-career association member, whom she regarded as

the future of the association, "to understand what it is they're looking for in terms of this association membership." Using data, she hoped to position the organization for future growth.

Grounding her initiatives in performance data helped Benita "figure out how to exert some level of control without having people reject me." The financial practices Benita implemented to stabilize her second nonprofit were driven by data of which her board members were previously unaware. When she and the CFO shared that financial data with the board, "They were all like, 'Whoa, this is really unbelievable.'" Tracking financial measures and benchmarking against other organizations was also part of a larger culture change she sought to bring to the organization, which was a final strategic initiative initiated by participants.

Culture change. Most participants referenced aspects of workplace culture or work environment during their interviews. For some, organizational culture was something they reacted to and influenced their choice to stay or leave a position on their career pathways. Four participants addressed organizational culture change either explicitly or implicitly as one of their strategic priorities.

Benita's efforts to bring about culture change at her nonprofit were directly related to the steps she took to bring financial stability to the organization. The organization, which has global activity and impact, had developed a culture of excessive spending on board member and staff travel, among other perks. "The board was also treated very, very well." Benita and the CFO presented a summary of the actual costs to the board, which agreed there needed to be a greater emphasis on cost controls. They instituted a number of policy changes that she recognized could have "backfired" if perceived to be "too directive" or "too strong," but resulted in a new way of doing business. Even after several years, she still receives periodic requests to cover certain expenses, but remains committed to a cost-saving culture.

I always tell people I wish I had the financial wherewithal to do that. I mean, wouldn't that be fun? I mean, I'd love to be able to give more away, but at this point in time, and when you benchmark with other associations, we had to get in line with everybody else. You know, I think they pretty much worked with me all along and there probably are a few people out there who are still mourning the old days, but those are not going to come back.

Brad reported being attentive to organizational culture throughout his career, which later informed his prioritization of it as a nonprofit executive. One of his earlier for-profit roles was as director of a newly integrated sales training division representing a variety of previously separate product lines. "That was an awesome role 'cause it was culture integration, process integration, looking for efficiencies in space and curriculum." His enjoyment of developing organizational culture was part of the appeal of the nonprofit position. The organization had recently merged with another and the newly hired CEO, "who was younger, more innovative more agile, more culture driven," had been commissioned by the combined boards to transform the overall culture from its historically formal roots to a more innovative work environment that would appeal to younger workers. In addition to the merger, the infusion of new staff raised ongoing culture challenges, which Brad was eager to address head-on. "It's culture both ways and finding the blend. Nothing's easy when it comes to culture 'cause there's culture stuff between the groups and there's culture stuff between this group and ops, so yeah, it's ongoing."

Coming in from highly competitive, for-profit workplace cultures that were "work hard, play hard," Dean described feeling out of place at his nonprofit, which he described as "work pretty hard and know that you're doing good work. Know that you're doing important work. There's not a play hard component." This contrast was not only an issue for him, but for other for-profit transplants that joined the organization. "It was almost like they were two sub-cultures within the organization. People that had grown up through social services, and people that had come from industry. They kind of spoke two different languages." Part of the challenge related

to how these two groups gauged success, which as a historically social service culture "was very much about activities, more so than it was about results," in addition to being "more political" and "subjective." Dean's role was to directly institute performance measurement frameworks, which he framed as a culture change:

> [The] combination of those two things, sort of a culture that was about propagating activities, more so than results, and more political approach to decision making, coupled with the fact that I had been at [a for-profit corporation] for 12 years, so everyone knew me, they knew what my strengths were—I knew how to get things done, just all of the little things, right? Coming here, I had to build new relationships and figure out how to get things done.

Dean anticipated that under his leadership the sub-cultures of the organization would "merge into one," becoming more of a results-oriented culture. According to Dean, over time, it did. "It ended up being that the organization came my way, more so than the other way around."

Reed was intentional about establishing a culture of accessibility between him and the staff team. In contrast to his predecessor, he opted not to work in his designated office and instead to work alongside his staff. When they moved to a new location, he designed the workspace without an office for the CEO to further emphasize his interest in what they were doing. This office culture is now deeply ingrained in how they operate and even defines how new staff are on-boarded. They know coming in that, "Your CEO is going to be walking around the office by the way, so if you're not up to that then you might want to not work here."

The structural reorganization Reed initiated also created an opportunity for him to reshape the culture of the organization. "I also just started defining the high performance culture that I wanted to establish for the organization, and really define what I meant by that to the entire team in the organization as a whole." As is often the case, culture change at Reed's organization took time and also precipitated significant turnover.

> Then we started running with it, and we gave [the staff team] about a year-and-a-half before I had to come to the decision that certain people were not going to ever achieve what it is I was trying to accomplish. So that's when we started going through some of the staff changes within the organization.

I describe these staff changes further in the next section, but note it here because it was instrumental in how Reed was able to accomplish culture change in his organization.

Reed was not the only participant who prioritized culture change resulting in significant personnel turnover. Dale also wanted to reset the culture of his organization. His nonprofit merged with another just before he started as CEO. He began by asking questions about how they had been managing the culture change and was disappointed to find it had not been an intentional priority and, in fact, had been conducted under the assumption that no one would lose their jobs as result of the merger. Coming from a corporate background and experienced in mergers, Dale knew there were efficiencies to be gained and lamented what he described as a nonprofit mentality about efficiencies affecting personnel. "The mentality is not only are they a charity for whatever cause they have, they actually almost feel like a charity to their employees. 'We have a big heart. We don't do that to our employees.'" I go into greater detail about the turnover Dale initiated in the next section, but again, note it here for its association to culture change.

All eight participants made reference to culture, either as a challenge they encountered or as an observed difference. Culture change as a strategic priority came across in half of the participant interviews. However, there are many dimensions to culture change, including as it relates to changes in the composition of staff teams. Reed and Dale planned for turnover as part of their intent to change organizational culture and improve performance. Change in personnel was a dominant theme emerging from participant stories and is the focus of the next section.

Staffing: Hiring and Transition

I requested that participants share positional organization charts (i.e., names omitted) of their core leadership teams ahead of the interviews. During the interviews, I asked them to describe any changes that have taken place on the chart since they started at the organization, structurally or with the incumbents of the positions. Several participants reported restructuring their teams and initiating or taking advantage of staffing transitions at the senior leadership level. As they sought to fill vacant or new positions, some intentionally hired other leaders with corporate or other private sector experience to help advance their strategic priorities for the organization.

In addition to changes across the wider organization, participants also reported changes on their core leadership teams. Mia, Shalene, and Robby all serve at smaller nonprofit organizations, relative to the other five participants. While their organizations were not without staffing changes following the start of their tenures, Reed, Benita, Dean, Brad, and Dale reported significant changes in personnel at their organizations since the start of their executive tenure.

Looking together at the organization chart of his nonprofit, Reed began with an overall observation about the significant turnover in composition of his staff team. "There's only three people on that organization chart that were here when I started. Everybody else is new." He then described a significant reorganization he initiated because, under his predecessor, the CEO had 20 direct reports. Instead, Reed formed business units by function within the organization and "then aligned all the people under it." In the new structure, there are eight vice presidents over the business areas reporting directly to him. They bring a combination of for-profit and nonprofit industry experience to the team.

Dale started his tenure at the nonprofit by asking questions of all his senior level leaders to assess their ability and skill at executing the responsibilities he felt they needed to do in order to make the organization successful. Unimpressed with the level of "sophistication," he "had some very serious conversations around what needed to happen" and gave them — and other leaders in the organization — six months to demonstrate improved capacity through training he provided, because "everybody deserves a chance." At the "C-level suite," Dale replaced all but one of the five executive officers. "They all came with corporate backgrounds, so the people I surrounded myself with, I did not have to teach or explain what I was doing." He initially retained the COO, who had been a nonprofit guy "his whole life" but also had private sector experience. I checked back on the organization's website and observed Dale recently hired a new COO that comes from a corporate background.

The raised bar of leadership produced turnover beyond the executive team. Dale communicated higher expectations across the management team and "within two years, of the top 25 people, only six were left." He acknowledged the impact of the turnover, leaving the organization with "a lot of bruises," even "traumatized," but assured the board they would "get through it" and that the changes were necessary for the sake of the purpose and impact of the organization.

> I owe it to the mission. I owe it to the 20,000 people who give us $9 million a year. We were only covering 48% of the beat. So I owe it to these folks, who look like investors to us, investors of the community, [that] we do more with their money.

Dale reported the new managers also expressed concern about the quality of line staff on their teams. "The people that I brought in said, golly, the next level you gave me to work with, they're not bright. They're not going to work. So then they got let go." He estimated that, of the roughly 100 employees across the business areas of the organization, about 40 were let go. After

initiating additional training requirements and performance expectations, another half dozen

employees left. To those who remained, he promised an exciting future and greater effectiveness

in their work.

> Buckle up, because it's going to be a hell of a ride and you're going to have a blast. You're going to learn, you're going to take your brilliance you have in nonprofits, you're going to take your beautiful heart and you're going to learn a lot of business principals and practices that will allow you to be so much more practical and capable.

Benita oversees a team of eight executives and, like Reed, noted "they're mostly all new."

More than just being new, she assessed them as operating at a higher level of skill and leadership

than the previous team. "The level of capability that I have in my direct reports now is so high…

I'm actually able to do my job at long last." Of her eight direct reports, four are new since she

started; one other, the chief financial officer (CFO) preceded her by about six months and Benita

"couldn't be happier with him as a partner." The board "did an excellent job choosing him."

When hiring new executives, Benita looked for people who were strong in stakeholder

management, external strategy, operational oversight, and technology. At least two of the four

executives she hired have corporate backgrounds.

There also has been significant turnover broadly across the organization. The previous

hiring and promotion criteria attracted and retained people with less developed skill sets and

lower levels of education. They were "nice people, but you actually need formal education for

these functional areas to do it well." Benita estimated 60% of the staff members are new since

she started three and a half years earlier. Praising the current composition of her executives and

larger staff team, Benita said, "I wish you could meet these folks because we have just an

amazing group of people who've come here." She speculated that many of the new team

members came to the organization because of her. "I think in some ways many of the people

came because they like what I'm doing, they like the strategy and they saw the transformation and wanted to be a part of that."

Dean started at his nonprofit almost nine years earlier as a senior director and has since been promoted to become president of the organization, working alongside the CEO. When I asked him how the organization chart he shared with me compared to the one in place when he started, he responded, "There've been some changes." The first CEO he worked under also came from a corporate background and wanted to take a "more aggressive approach to resource development" in order to grow reach and impact, which resulted in an expansion of executive functions from five to eight. According to Brad, "That's gonna make the difference between us being a successful organization and fully realizing our vision." The next CEO came from a nonprofit background and consolidated executive decision-making by promoting Dean from chief operations officer to president and then differentiating the CEO and president as the "executive office" above the other executive team members. Dean explained, the "executive team wasn't functioning very effectively, that there was too much consensus decision-making and not enough, sort of, authoritative decision-making from the very top of the organization."

Part of the reorganization brought a total of four, internally focused positions under Dean's oversight. Two were original incumbents of those roles. Dean promoted one of his previous direct reports to the executive team and hired the other. When filling the positions, Dean said he prioritized skills in strategic agility, change leadership, and teamwork.

Five of the eight executives came from the private sector. All four of Dean's direct reports have private sector backgrounds. The other four executive positions report directly to the CEO and are more externally focused. With the exception of the development officer, who also has a corporate background, the officers for programs, communications, and government

relations all have more traditional social service backgrounds. Dean acknowledged a preference

for hiring executives with private sector experience because of the number of stakeholder and

network relationships that are with corporations. "We actually have quite a strong presence of

folks who have some corporate background."

Brad's organization chart underwent substantial change as well, driven by the CEO who

had been hired from a corporate role a year before hiring Brad. The original chart included a set

of six core executive functions, including COO, CFO, chief human resources officer (CHRO),

chief development officer (CDO), as well as three vice presidents. The CEO elevated one of the

vice president positions to become the chief experience officer (CXO), which "in any other

organization would be chief marketing officer." In addition to being a "fancy title," Brad

explained it was "signaling what we're gonna do is different."

As CXO, Brad continued the development and expansion of the functional capacity of his

team. He hired a senior vice president of technology and two support positions, eliminated the

director of marketing position to create two additional marketing positions, supported

fundraising with additional new marketing roles, and merged marketing with sales. Brad also

interacts with a board committee on marketing. Previously, this group simply reviewed sales

numbers on spreadsheets and "every meeting was the same," causing Brad to wonder why it

even existed. Now, he is "changing it so they're getting more feedback and talking about some

of this evolution, changing the way we think of the way we do this work. They're hugely

complimentary, I haven't gotten any negative feedback from the board"

All of this has contributed to an overall shift in the strategic orientation of the

organization. "We've been slowly improving the strategy level and the business planning

level… applying these things most [for-profit] organizations take for granted." Under Brad's

leadership, the field of marketing is rising in influence across the organization, offering principled guidance to operations and other business areas. "It's not a power struggle. I don't need to own the world. I just want to make sure what we're doing is right." Brad evaluated the impact of the changes positively. "It's been some of the reason, I think, for our success [overall as an organization].

Brad attributed his ability to enact these changes to the CEO, who also comes from a corporate background.

> "It worked for me because he came first. If I were to work for the old [nonprofit background] CEO, we'd be years behind where we are now, but [the new CEO with a for-profit background] 'gets it.' Without that, none of this would be possible, 'cause he's willing to spend the money."

Following suit, Brad hired other staff from corporate backgrounds, including the senior vice president of technology. Ultimately, Brad believes a "blend" of people with corporate and nonprofit experience working together in the organization is necessary to achieve the greatest success. "It's the together that probably makes it work best. You could try and refine the blend — is it three quarters new and a quarter old, or three quarters old [as a ratio of] for-profit, non-profit? That might be a more interesting debate."

Change in personnel was a common occurrence after participants began their nonprofit tenures. Many found opportunities or initiated changes at the executive level of their leadership teams. In doing so, they frequently drew from for-profit pools to fill those positions. For some, like Reed and Dale, the turnover in staff extended beyond executive teams to include organization-wide reconstitutions. Personnel change is a significant part of the participants' stories of organizational change and will be explored further as part of my analysis chapters.

Summary

I described the participants' approach to their first year at a nonprofit as their entry posture. Approaches clustered into three types of postures: "prepared to adapt," "caught off-guard," and "stood firm." Flexibility and adaptability characterized the first two approaches, though participants in the second category described challenges or awakening experience before re-posturing to adapt. Some participants described a third kind of posture, resolving to maintain their entry perspective by changing the nonprofit environment, rather than adapting to it.

All participants purposefully planned organizational changes for their nonprofits. These changes took the form of intentional strategic priorities, which I organized into sets based on common descriptions by the participants. A second form of organizational change that was not uncommon among participant experiences was personnel turnover. Staffing changes occurred by design and by opportunity at both the executive level as well as across the organization.

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS

In an era of scandals, shady dealings, and mismanagement, models of positive and effective organizational leadership are needed across all sectors. A variety of leadership theories emphasize the importance of moral and ethical foundation, including authentic leadership theory. Indeed, the recent attention given to authentic leadership may be "spurred by deep-rooted concerns about the ethical conduct of today's leaders based on chilling examples of corporate and government malfeasance" (Gardner, et al., 2011, p. 1120). Avolio and Gardner (2005) posited authentic leadership presents a counterweight to the almost dystopian state of leadership in today's society:

> We suggest such societal challenges have precipitated a renewed focus on restoring confidence, hope, and optimism; being able to rapidly bounce back from catastrophic events and display resiliency; helping people in their search for meaning and connection by fostering a new self-awareness; and genuinely relating to all stakeholders (associates, customers, suppliers, owners, and communities). (p. 316)

This view is echoed by Northouse (2016), who described a societal outcry for authentic leaders: "People feel apprehensive and insecure about what is going on around them, and as a result, they long for bona fide leadership they can trust and for leaders who are honest and good," making research and application of authentic leadership "timely and worthwhile," (p. 195).

In this chapter, I use authentic leadership theory to analyze the participants' motivations for crossing over from the for-profit sector to nonprofit leadership roles. I begin with a brief recap of authentic leadership as presented in Chapter 2. Then I apply the components of authentic leadership to the data from my study and consider the concept of "life-stories" (Shamir & Eilam, 2005) in relation to the career pathway stories the participants told during their interviews. In the second part of the chapter, I use the four-frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2017) to analyze the strategic priorities participants implemented at their nonprofits.

Authentic Leadership Theory

Springing from a variety of schools of thought — sociology, education, and psychology — authentic leadership theory is rooted in the idea that people bring their full selves into a variety of leadership contexts. From a positive perspective, people can approach leadership transparently and sincerely as a way of establishing credibility with followers. Developed and propagated by academics and practitioners in recent years, authentic leadership theory is among the newer leadership theories. While some variation exists in the literature about authentic leadership, the most common conceptualization of it is captured as four components: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). These components are cultivated by three influencing factors, including positive psychological attributes, moral reasoning, and critical life events (Northouse, 2016). As a conceptual lens for understanding nonprofit crossover leaders, authentic leadership theory explained both developmental and operational perspectives of their leadership in nonprofit organizations.

I selected Northouse's (2016) presentation of authentic leadership for the analysis of participant experience in my study. It provided an explanatory framework of their inner motivation for crossing sectors and of the guidance system that brought them to the nonprofit sector. I begin this section by describing the four components and the three factors that influence leadership development and describe how the model explains the leadership approach of the participants in my study.
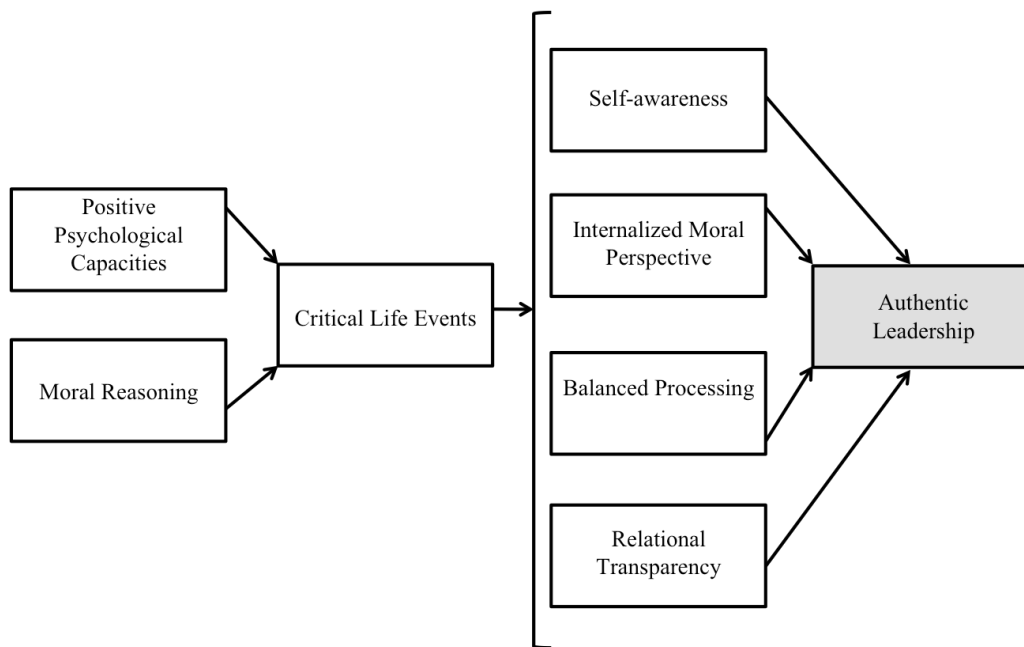
Figure 3. Model of authentic leadership.

Northouse's model presents four components and three influencing factors leading to the development of an authentic leadership framework. (Northouse, 2016, Figure 9.2) [Reformatted for clarity of reproduction]

The components of authentic leadership (Figure 3) are behaviors and perspectives demonstrated by leaders that define how they approach and conduct themselves in leadership roles. The four components are self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. The three influencing factors of developing include positive psychological capacities, moral reasoning, and critical life events. Together, they inform and capture the authentic leadership experience.

Self-Awareness

The first component, *self-awareness*, is knowledge and acceptance of one's own assets, liabilities, and guiding principles. It reflects "an understanding of how one derives and makes meaning of the world and how that meaning making process impacts the way one views himself

or herself over time," (Walumbwa, et al., 2008, p. 95). It includes knowledge of strengths and weaknesses, as well as of "core values, identity, emotions, motives, and goals, and coming to grips with who you really are at the deepest level," (Northouse, 2016, pp. 202-203).

Participants in my study displayed evidence of self-awareness. Self-awareness emerged from their stories of mission, whether known early on or discovered along their career pathways. In either case, all participants were or became consciously aware of mission as a motivating force in their crossover journey.

Participants claiming early knowledge of their missions in life made career decisions based on their awareness of mission. Reed's work in for-profit roles left him unsatisfied with the social impact of the organizations. His decision to leave the for-profit sector was directly associated with his personal mission to "leave the world a better place than when I got here." Resolved to follow mission and not to be "beholden" to an organization, he concluded he "needed to go find something else to do." Likewise, Mia demonstrated self-awareness as part of her career progression. Initially, Mia considered consulting work to be "good for a young professional," but also recognized her value for the intellectual stimulation of data analysis and "quantitative work." Awareness of this value ultimately directed her toward a nonprofit role combining academic and practitioner-based scholarship. Dale demonstrated early self-awareness of his ability "to take a challenging situation and turn it into something amazing." This informed his understanding of mission and purpose, which he described as the most important part of leadership. Dale also showed self-awareness of his true motivation for "making a difference" , rather than being driven by fear, money, or worldly perceptions of success.

Those discovering their sense of mission later in their career pathway stories experienced an ongoing process of self-awareness. Self-awareness played a significant role in that discovery.

Dean looked up the corporate ladder and recognized it "wasn't the kind of life that I wanted for myself, or for my family, ultimately." This became apparent to him as each promotion left him feeling like he was not on the right path. He described these moments of self-awareness as "signs I needed to pay attention to," eventually leading him to choose a nonprofit career, which "feels right." Benita described herself as having "always been very service oriented." Though her initial career path was in scientific and corporate fields, she eventually linked awareness of her personal service orientation with the service-oriented mission of the nonprofit sector: "We're tackling problems that need to be tackled for our society and for the global populations." Brad was aware of his "contentment gene," which inclined him to find personal satisfaction in any situation that included elements of his personal mission to get paid fairly, do good work, and interact with people. He became aware of the importance of "cause" to his missional formula as result of his nonprofit experience. Retrospectively, he recognized it was present in his former work at the medical device company, but was something "I don't think I realized" at the time.

Similarly, Shalene eventually discovered how important it was for her to have a direct connection with helping people. The separation she felt at the pharmaceutical company from patient impact caused her to question what she was doing day-to-day, a feeling that only heightened while working in a manufacturing position where she described herself as a "cog in the machine." Robby's awareness at an earlier point in his career of the "the data problem" — that not a lot of data in the sciences was shareable — eventually matured as part of his decision to re-enter the nonprofit sector in an open source data warehouse.

Self-awareness was a clear component of the leadership experiences of the participants in my study. For some, self-awareness was cultivated early on and drove their career progression through a clear sense of mission. For others self-awareness was part of an ongoing process

leading to greater understanding of personal mission. In both cases, self-awareness of mission was a central part of what motivated the participants to shift from the for-profit sector into nonprofit roles.

Internalized Moral Perspective

Internalized moral perspective means leaders are self-regulating of their behavior and act in accordance with their own moral standards, ethics, and values. This stands in contrast with succumbing to "group, organizational, and societal pressures," (Walumbwa, et al, 2008, p. 96). Behavioral consistency is observable to others and is part of what earns the respect of others and cultivates authentic followership (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

An internalized moral perspective featured prominently in the beliefs, values, and ethics I depicted as an "internal compass" in Chapter 4. Much like the component of authentic leadership, participants demonstrated use of an ethical and value-based framework to regulate their personal and leadership behaviors, independent of outside pressures from peers and social expectations of career success and advancement. While inherent in their career pathway stories of mission, this perspective also manifested in the positions of the compass pointing toward *meaning over money* and *integrity*.

The participants' decision to leave or to not choose to pursue higher paying for-profit careers is reflective of the self-regulating, internalized standards of authentic leadership. Reed shared that willingness to work for less money ran counter to the culture among his MBA program peers, who chided him for "throwing the return on investment out through the window." Similarly, much to the surprise of his corporate peers, Dean left a pinnacle position, turned down lucrative positions at other businesses, and accepted a nonprofit executive role because more money "didn't feel it was gonna necessarily be the answer to that process of discernment that I

had been looking for." His decision elicited admiration from his peers, who after expressing surprise admitted they "had similar feelings, but they were just too locked into that corporate ladder." Benita chose to live counter-culturally to the norm of her for-profit peers and accepted the relatively lower pay of the nonprofit sector, opting to "live relatively simply in my life. That's my own choice." Dale said he still "commands a high salary by nonprofit standards," but maintained he always held the belief that "money didn't matter."

The internalized moral perspective of the participants extended beyond a willingness to work for less money. They also were compelled to follow a direction on their internal compasses toward integrity. This perspective included a value of "doing the right thing" and being true to themselves by aligning their careers with their convictions, rather than their convictions with their careers. Mia left a for-profit work environment she decided was not ethical. Dale "truncated" his career by taking a step backward in an attempt to salvage time with his family. Maintaining work-life balance and healthy family relationships also motivated Dean to leave his successful for-profit career. Reed realized he was "not connecting my heart to what I do everyday" and resolved, "I need to change that." Participant decisions to act with integrity in their careers were distinctly grounded in a moral framework best explained by authentic leadership.

Balanced Processing

A third component of authentic leadership, *balanced processing,* is an objective approach to analysis of data prior to arriving at a conclusion. Authentic leaders demonstrate openness to and seek out the perspectives of others — even those with whom they disagree — as part of their decision making process. Northouse (2016) described this component as "avoiding favoritism about certain issues and remaining unbiased," (p. 203). Avolio and Gardner (2005)

acknowledged the overly aspirational nuance of "unbiased" and instead advocated for use of the

term "balanced," (p. 317):

> Instead of arguing that authentic leaders and followers are free of cognitive biases, we assert that they are inclined and able to consider multiple sides of an issue and multiple perspectives as they assess information in a relatively balanced manner. (p. 317)

Unbiased or balanced, authentic leadership seeks diverse perspectives and multiple points of

information before making a decision or arriving at a conclusion.

This component was demonstrated in one of the strategic priorities many of the

participants initiated in their nonprofit organizations: improvement to performance measurement

systems that would yield more objective, data-driven decision-making. Dean was specifically

hired to implement a performance measurement system for an organization that lacked "strategic

discipline" and followed a "more is better" approach to program development rather than

focusing on data-driven decision-making. Similarly, Reed found decision-making at his

nonprofit was often subjectively driven by relationship rather than objective data. He instituted

new frameworks to complement the relationally driven approach to be justified by data. Dale

observed the lack of data in their distribution channels and implemented geo-spatial mapping

systems to more accurately determine strategic distribution locations and improve efficiency. He

also collected data on performance and initiated an evaluation system for their organizational

partners. Benita worked with her CFO to generate financial data to challenge the spending

culture perpetuated by her nonprofit board members. Clearly, participants favored objective data

to guide key decisions affecting the strategic and efficient operation of their organizations.

Openness to contrasting views also was evident in some of the interactions participants

reported in their initial nonprofit experiences. Dale's implementation of measurement systems

did not go unchallenged by his employees. An employee confronted Dale with her concerns

with the new system. She said she understood "some of the benefits, but I just think we've lost our heart." More pointedly, she noted amidst all of his talk "about channel management, about growth strategies, about data… I haven't heard you talk about a client yet." Dale listened and appreciated her confrontation. While he contested her assessment that they had lost their heart, he resolved to dedicate two half-days each month to direct client service to better ground his perspective of the impact of the organization.

Similarly, Dean was accustomed to more of a top-down approach from his corporate background and advocated for recommendations he thought were "smart and strategic." He also was confronted by co-workers who "were used to a much more collaborative approach to strategy and program development: "Did you develop those in a vacuum? Which members did you engage to develop those recommendations?" Rather than shutting down their perspective, Dean reflected on their reaction and altered his approach. It was "a bit of an epiphany for me, in terms of how to get things done." Benita also displayed balanced processing behavior when she shared a plan she was going to implement with another nonprofit colleague who determined the plan "would never work" because she neglected to consider the culture of associations in her assessment. Rather than dismissing his critique, she leaned in and said, "Say more." Openness to contrary viewpoints and willingness to change is a mark of authentic leadership.

Relational Transparency

Finally, *relational transparency* refers to an unmasked approach to relating with others. It is "being open and honest in presenting one's true self to others," (Northouse, 2016, p. 203). According to Walumbwa, et al. (2008), "such behavior promotes trust through disclosures that involve openly sharing information and expressions of one's true thoughts and feelings while

trying to minimize displays of inappropriate emotions," (p. 95). Shamir and Eilam (2005) bluntly concluded that authentic leaders "do not fake their leadership," (p. 396).

Participants demonstrated aspects of relational transparency in stories associated with the compass points of *work relationships* and *integrity*, as well as in examples of *entry posture*, described in Chapter 4. Brad was aware of his intimidating characteristics and the skepticism others felt his for-profit background. He was willing to moderate his approach and build trust with coworkers, even apologizing for mistakes and missteps, but still asserted, "I can't change who I am." In a different way, long before he started at a nonprofit, Reed also determined to always be fully himself in his work:

> I've never hidden the persona of I'm really the caregiver kind of guy, but I'm going to pretend I'm the business guy…. This is who I am. I really have always brought my heart into every meeting in every conversation.

Reed's leadership choice of "management by walking around" and determining not to have a separate office space from his employees also modeled transparency and communicated "that the CEO actually paid an interest in what they were doing." Benita followed a principle of relational transparency by resolving not to pretend she knew more about her nonprofit than she actually did. "I knew nothing about the military, I knew nothing about government contracting. I knew nothing about how to work with the FDA or whatever, so I was listening and learning." The approach gained the respect of her nonprofit colleagues and "helped me to be kind of accepted." Relational transparency was very much a part of the authentic leadership components displayed by the participants. How these components developed in them is the focus of the three influencing factors of authentic leadership, which I describe next.

Three Influencing Factors

Drawing together research on authentic leadership and research from positive psychology and positive organizational behavior, Northouse (2016) depicted three influencing factors that contribute to the development of authentic leadership (Figure 3). *Positive psychological capacities* "predispose or enhance a leader's capacity to develop the components of authentic leadership" (Northouse, 2016, p. 204), which include confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience. Confidence, or self-efficacy, is "the belief that one has the ability to successfully accomplish a specified task" and enables a leader "to be persistent when obstacles arise," (Northouse, 2016, p. 204). Hope is related to goal setting and focus on a future state being advanced toward. Optimism is a framework of positive thinking that anticipates positive outcomes from efforts and activities. Leaders with resilience are able to adapt to challenges and recover from adversity, rather than retreat from it.

A second influencing factor in the formation of authentic leadership is *moral reasoning*. Capacity for moral reasoning drives the development of the balanced processing and internalized moral perspective components. Recognizing that such capacity can increase over time, Northouse (2016) explained the benefits of enhanced capacity for the leadership experience:

> Higher levels of moral reasoning make it possible for the authentic leader to make decisions that transcend individual differences and align individuals toward a common goal. They enable leaders to be selfless and make judgments that serve the greater good of the group, organization, or community. Moral reasoning capacity also enables authentic leaders to use this capacity to promote justice and achieve what is right for a community. (p. 205)

The third factor influencing the development of authentic leadership components is *critical life events*. Such events "can be positive events, like receiving an unexpected promotion, having a child, or reading an important book; or they can be negative events, like being diagnosed with cancer, getting a negative year-end evaluation, or having a loved one die,"

(Northouse, 2016, p. 205). Critical life events are open to interpretation by the people who experience them, becoming part of their self-narratives or "life-stories" (Shamir & Eilam, 2005) and are sources of personal growth resulting in a deepened expression of authenticity in leadership.

An in-depth exploration of early influences and psychological disposition were not part of my study. However, evidence of the three influencing factors was woven throughout participants' career pathway stories, their sense of mission, and their commitment to making a positive social impact, as well as in their sense of self-efficacy and integrity. Reed expressed optimism in his personal mission to "leave the world a better place than when I got here," as did Shalene in her mission to enable her staff to "provide the best services to these kiddos." Mia hoped her work at the financial policy center could in some way help avert a future national financial crisis. Confidence was central to Dale marketing himself as someone who could "take a challenging situation and turn it into something amazing" and Benita describing herself as a "turnaround artist." Robby was inspired by a future state in which data was accessible and usable to transform the pharmaceutical and health industry. Dean heard a vocational calling to match his greatest passion with the world's greatest need and found he could effectively increase the impact of coordinated food distribution to people who needed it.

Shamir and Eilam's (2005) emphasis on life-stories as critical life events in the development of authentic leadership is particularly applicable to my data:

> Authentic leadership development can be conceived of as the development of role-person merger, self-knowledge, self-concept clarity, self-concordance, and through the construction of a life-story that confers meaning on experienced circumstances and events and organizes them in a meaningful and coherent way. The life-story conveys the leader qualities, including both strengths and weaknesses, explains the leader's values, convictions and justifies his or her vision and claim for leadership. It provides a meaning system from which the leader acts and this makes his or her actions self-expressive. (p. 408)

In recounting their career pathway stories, participants shared moments, themes, strengths, weaknesses, values, and meaning that impacted their thinking and expressions of mission over many years. Their career pathway stories, whether rehearsed beforehand or for the first time during the interview, were life-stories. Participants described certain positive and negative moments in their stories. Their stories aligned with the list of critical life events provided by Northouse (2016, p. 205); critical life events involved promotions, children and family, important books, and performance evaluations. While more in-depth exploration of influences on participants went beyond the scope of my study, the influencing factors of authentic leadership seem close beneath the surface and at time even manifested clearly in the stories they shared with me.

The Four-Frames Model of Organizational Leadership

Bolman and Deal's (2017) four-frame model of organizational leadership offers insight into the leadership priorities participants identified for their nonprofits. As a comprehensive model, the four frames — structural, human resource, political, and symbolic — represent "windows, maps, tools, lenses, orientations, prisms, and perspectives" that leaders subconsciously use to make sense of their organizational context and to define their approach forward (Bolman & Deal, 2017, pp. 10-11). Rather than claiming "one best way" to do leadership, the model suggests that people who demonstrate ability to alternate between multiple frames are more successful and effective in their leadership of organizations: "Leaders fail when they take too narrow a view. Unless they can think flexibly and see organizations from multiple angles, they will be unable to deal with the full range of issues they inevitably encounter," (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 421). Strategic priorities participants implemented primarily reflected the structural frame, though not exclusively (Table 4).

Table 4.

Participant Strategic Priorities Organized by the Four Frames

Four Frames	Strategic Priorities Reported by Participants
Structural	- Marketing - Technological Improvements - Board/Governance Transformation - Operational Excellence - Financial Stability - Performance Management - Culture Change
Human Resource	- Marketing - Culture Change
Political	Board/Governance Transformation
Symbolic	Culture Change

The Structural Frame: Order and Efficiency

The structural frame provides a coherent lens for understanding the participants' strategic priorities and staffing changes they initiated. Participants frequently referred to alignment challenges in their organizations. All seven of the strategic priorities championed by the participants in their nonprofit organizations fit within the structural frame: marketing, technological improvements, board/governance transformation, operational excellence, financial stability, performance measurement, and culture change. Some of the initiatives, along with aspects of the staffing changes, also fit the human resource, political, and symbolic frames.

Participants in the study frequently indicated surprise and dissatisfaction with the state of systems, processes, and structure at their nonprofits and took immediate steps to address the deficiencies. Dale, Benita, and Brad were brought in by their boards to help turn around their organizations with their business background and perspective and the other five initiated

substantive change on their own. The changes they enacted follow the six core assumptions of the structural frame presented in Chapter 2.

The first core assumption states that organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives. The internal compass value of creating positive social impact demonstrated that all participants have an orientation toward mission and affecting positive changes through their nonprofit organizations. Whether in health research and treatment (Shalene, Benita, and Robby), food distribution to low-income populations (Dean and Dale), economic policy and practice (Mia), improved employee work environments (Reed), or family and community service (Brad), all participants were drawn to their nonprofits because of the established purposes of the organizations.

The second core assumption emphasizes efficiency and performance through specialization and division of labor. This priority explains the participants' attention to employee job descriptions and hiring preferences, particularly for roles in marketing. Reed and Mia both prioritized writing or re-writing employee job descriptions to better capture and focus the work of their staff teams and Shalene moved a staff member into a role that better reflected her expertise in human resources. All participants stressed the importance of marketing skill sets among employees for the improved impact of their organizations. Reed created a marketing functional unit and Brad, Benita, Dean, and Dale completely revamped their marketing departments from general communications to trained and experienced marketing professionals. Shalene and Mia sought out marketing professionals as their first hires in their nonprofit organizations. Robby was hired, in part, because of his skill set in marketing products and prioritized a rebuilding of his organization's communications infrastructure. Specialization and division of labor was a clear priority.

The third core assumption highlights the importance of coordination and control systems for organizational alignment. This most prominently manifested among participants in the strategic priorities of operational excellence and financial stability. Participants collectively identified deficiencies in areas of their organizations dedicated to supply chain management, process documentation, financial management and fundraising, human resources practices, performance metrics, and quality standards. Brad focused on the coordination between his marketing team and the work of other departments at his nonprofit and, along with Dale, monitored the overall opportunities for coordination as result of the mergers their organizations recently encountered. As operations director, Shalene coordinated an array of activities to ensure alignment across her organization. Reed, Benita, Dean and Dale's reconstitution of senior management teams was, in part, driven by an effort to improve coordination and control of aligned systems and processes to improve results.

The fourth core assumption elevates rationality over other agendas and pressures. Participant attention to the strategic initiative of organizational culture has components related to this assumption. Brad sought to bring innovation to a historically conservative organization driven by conformity. Dean's introduction of a results based culture was initially perceived as a foreign language in his organization, which previously operated more from an activity based mindset. Similarly, Reed and Dale implemented program development approaches to back heartfelt ideas with objective data. Benita confronted excessive spending on travel and perks at the board and staff levels to restore financial balance to the organization. The structural frame provides a unifying explanation of the common denominators of these culture change initiatives: rationally driven culture.

The fifth core assumption is that structure needs to fit the environmental context of the organization. The strategic prioritization of technological improvement reflects this aspect of the structural frame. Mia benchmarked against commercial online customer service to define standards for her organization's web interface for members. Similarly, Brad assessed his organization's customer digital experience as "archaic" and substandard compared to mobile app and web-based service innovations. Dale leveraged emerging geospatial data to maximize his organization's approach to food distribution.

Finally, the sixth core assumption of the structural frame posits that problems arise and performance suffers under the wrong organizational structure. All participants recognized the need for some kind of organizational redesign at their nonprofits to improve current impact and to prepare for future growth. These changes came with strategic initiatives related to board/governance transformation and performance measurement, as well as overall staffing changes. Benita and Reed engaged in board transformation to improve governance and to focus board members on higher-level thinking and oversight. Reed also restructured his organization into functional units to reduce the number of managers reporting to him and to better align the nonprofit. Dale assessed the proficiency of his executive level leaders, management team, and staff as he embarked on a total overhaul of the organization. Brad reconstructed his marketing division to better resource other business areas. In collaboration with the CEO, Dean restructured the executive team to promote better decision-making and clear lines of authority. Shalene and Mia are both evaluating the structure and composition of their staff teams in anticipation of future growth.

The Human Resource Frame: Relationships and Motivation

Fewer examples of participant actions and strategic priorities fit the human resource frame than the structural frame. Nonetheless, the human resource frame offers another insightful angle on participant experiences and priorities. Participants were not solely focused on factory-like improvements in efficiency and alignment. They were also concerned with the human side of their organizations, the interdependence of people and organizations, and with the "fit" between what their staff members were being asked to do and what was in their areas of strength. Examples of actions and priorities that can be explained by the core assumptions of the human resource frame are noted below.

The first core assumption of the human resource frame emphasizes the human side of organizational life: organizations exist to serve human needs and not the converse. This assumption aligns with the motivations reported by some participants for their move to the nonprofit sector. Reed and Dale came to the realization that their 60-80 hour for-profit workweeks were only benefiting their organizations and sought more personally meaningful work in the nonprofit sector. Similarly, Benita found her hard work largely benefiting the bottom line of senior executives in her for-profit experience and left for something a more satisfying legacy. Shalene reported feeling like a "cog in the system" earlier in her career, but found personal connection to supporting the mission of her nonprofit staff. Brad's work philosophy always included "the people," but saw a closer connection in his community based nonprofit. The human side of organizations clearly was part of the mental model of the participants in their career journeys to the nonprofit sector.

The second core assumption highlights the mutuality of the organization-employee relationship. This perhaps featured most prominently in Dale's adopted leadership philosophy

from Max De Pree: "Leadership means having the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the those who permit you to lead them." Dale considered it a privilege to lead his staff and sought to invest in their development and fulfillment through their work, while also maintaining high expectations for the quality of their work and contribution to organizational performance. Even his decision to let go of a number of employees can be explained by the human resource frame: no one wins when fit is not prioritized. The importance of relationships to motivation also was evident in Reed's commitment to not having office space separate from his staff. While also contributing to culture, which will be addressed in the symbolic frame, his action demonstrated an understanding that relationships between leaders and employees matter, and that he genuinely "paid an interest in what they were doing." Shalene and Benita expressed a similar value for the mutual quality of their work relationships and partnerships.

The third and fourth core assumptions focus on the importance of fit between people and their roles, noting that poor fit leads to mutual suffering and exploitation or can be the source of mutual benefit between employees and organizations. In the strategic priority of marketing, Shalene advocated for a new, dedicated position to counter the approach "you are always going to see in nonprofits" of staff taking on multiple responsibilities regardless of their skill sets. Mia observed a similar situation in her nonprofit where staff had been hired because of personal connection to the former executive director rather than for the skills they brought to the organization. Benita's initial marketing and membership staff "had title" but "were absolutely not marketing and membership people." Reconstituting that team and hiring an experienced marketing person created a situation in which all parties benefited and was a move Benita regarded as the "best decision I ever made." The staffing changes the participants described were not one-sided; they wanted the best for their staff and for the success of their organization.

The human resource frame helps to highlight the dual perspective of their decisions and actions. The political frame offers a third lens from which to analyze participant actions and priorities.

The Political Frame: Coalitions and Power

The political and symbolic frames were the least represented in participant actions and strategic priorities, but still provide a useful lens from which to understand their perspectives and decisions. Participants were aware of power dynamics in their organizations and the political nature of their nonprofit work. However, examples of the five core assumptions are limited.

The first two core assumptions in the political frame establish a premise that organizations are built on coalitions of stakeholders with differing priorities and interests. Benita explicitly stated her observation of this reality compared to for-profits, noting that nonprofits are "way more political" and required learning about stakeholder perspectives as diverse as the military, governmental agencies, corporations, and other nonprofit organizations. Similarly, as Dale took stock of the situation in his nonprofit, he made note of the tensions present from their recent merger as well as between departments:

> And then I said, "How are we doing with combined cultures?" They said, "We don't like them and they don't like us." Then I came to find out that ops didn't like web development, web development didn't like ops, finance didn't like either, and they all hated HR. So no work was done there.

Whether or not due to dispersed power, Dale observed the stymied work efforts were a product of a breakdown among potential coalitions within the organization and sought to form alliances and alignment.

The third and forth core assumptions highlight difficult allocation decisions in a context of scarce resources. This perspective sheds light on Brad's description of conflict during a budgeting process in which operations requested $20,000 for a halftime volunteer coordinator and he requested $1 million for innovative technology. Operations' budget request was denied,

but his was granted. Brad's awareness of the emerging organizational strategy and his coalition with the CEO who also "gets" the innovative mindset secured his allocation of funds: "Without that, none of this would be possible, 'cause he's willing to spend the money." Brad noted operation's displeasure with the allocation, "It just didn't make sense to them." Conflict eventually gave way to "support" for "the value that we're bringing," but Brad will able to normalize the conflict as part of moving the organization forward as a whole.

The fifth core assumption of the political frame posits that common goals emerge from negotiations among stakeholders with competing interests. This view explains Brad and Dean's "caught off-guard" experience in dealing with nonprofit stakeholders. Brad entered his nonprofit with "guns-a-blazing" only to encounter resistance from the COO who challenged the notion of the "science" of marketing. Acknowledging that he pushed too hard, Brad apologized and eventually won back the COO's trust. Similarly, Dean encountered resistance when he tried pushing forward ideas that were not developed collaboratively with stakeholders. He learned to work power dynamics "to be able to maximize your influence in a role where you don't necessarily have authority over various different stakeholders." Brad realized in order to get things done he needed "to do things differently," including engaging in stakeholder negotiations to produce greater ownership of changes and improvements to advance organizational goals.

Participants understood the political nature of their nonprofit context, but there were fewer examples of use of the political leadership frame compared to the structural or human resource frames. Even so, the political frame proved to be a helpful lens of analysis for participant experiences. The symbolic frame was the least represented of the four frames, but still offers a window into the experience of the crossover leaders in my study.

The Symbolic Frame: Culture and Meaning

The symbolic frame was the least utilized perspective of Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames. Several participants referred to culture over the course of the interviews, but only four addressed culture as a strategic priority. Among the five core assumptions of the symbolic frame, only the fifth offers the most helpful perspective for understanding participant experience and priorities.

The fifth core assumption recognizes culture as the superglue of an organization that united everyone toward a common goal. Brad talked explicitly about his prioritization of "culture integration" in his nonprofit, based on his prior experience in the for-profit sector. He even understood his willingness to "do stupid stuff" and integrate fun into the workplace environment as part of culture building in the organization. Dean's approach to establishing performance management systems could be considered a form of culture building. He perceived it as confronting a culture that propagated "activities, more so than results." He predicted under his leadership these competing cultures would "merge into one" and claimed they later did as "the organization came my way more so than the other way around." While the end result was a unified culture working together toward results based outcomes, the process involved was not clear from the interview. Similarly, the performance culture changes Dale imposed on his organization were met with grave resistance and resulted in significant turnover, as it did in Reed's organization. I address the absence of meaning, symbols, and events in the participant stories in the next chapter on implications, but here simply note that symbolic activity is limited in participant stories.

Summary

I presented two analytic frameworks that I applied to the data from my study. Participant perspectives and experiences of leadership in nonprofit organizations reflect the four components of authentic leadership theory. Self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relationship transparency aligned with the data presented in Chapters Four and Five and provided a clear model for future, more in-depth, research on nonprofit crossover leadership.

Similarly, the four-frames model of organizational leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2017) offered a framework for understanding the organizational changes participants initiated in their nonprofit organizations. Participant initiatives largely fell within the structural frame. This could be because all participants came from the for-profit sector and all were formally educated in business, economics, or finance. The historical roots of the framework come from private industry and have informed business practices for over a century. The primary problem leaders tend to identify from this perspective is organizational misalignment. Examples of human resources, political, and symbolic frames were also evident — though not pervasive — in participant accounts of their nonprofit experiences.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

I studied the motivations and experiences of for-profit leaders who crossed sectors to become nonprofit executives. I investigated the career pathway stories that ultimately led them to a senior role in a nonprofit organization and explored their initial experiences in the nonprofit sector. The intent of my phenomenological study was to develop an understanding of the nonprofit crossover leader experience. In this chapter, I summarize my findings and discuss implications for nonprofit crossover leaders. I also offer recommendations for nonprofit boards considering hiring for-profit executives. Before discussing limitations of my study and provide recommendations for future research, I share a recommendation for nonprofit leadership and management programs in educational institutions.

Understanding the Motivations of Nonprofit Crossover Leaders

Participants shared complex career histories beginning with their higher education degrees, then outlining their progression through the for-profit sector, and ultimately disclosing what brought them to a nonprofit senior executive role. This story outline was familiar for some participants, who reported previously sharing it formally or informally with other people. Others engaged in self-reflection as they constructed their career pathway stories during the interview. A common thread in the stories was their motivation to move from a place of career dissatisfaction to more meaningful and fulfilling work. Participants made this transition at different life stages, ranging from early to late in their careers. I identified two themes related to motivation for crossing sectors: a conscious awareness of an overall life mission and the prioritization of an internal framework of beliefs, values, and ethics to ultimately align their work with this system. I will briefly summarize each theme and then discuss possible implications based on my findings, incorporating some of the advice they had for others (see Appendix).

Conscious Awareness of Mission

The first theme of motivation to cross sectors was a conscious awareness of mission, or a greater sense of purpose, the participants discovered they could directly express in a nonprofit work context. Some participants became aware of their personal sense of mission early on, either in a college experience or an entry-level position. For these participants, knowledge of a personal life mission served as a guide as they explored and accepted roles in organizations. This knowledge also helped them determine when it was time to move on to another role as they encountered work experiences that felt misaligned with their missions. Other participants identified or clarified this larger purpose later in their career experience. They described how work experiences focused and sharpened their sense of personal mission. For some, this focus occurred just before transitioning to the nonprofit sector and prompted a nonprofit job search. For others, clarification came during their nonprofit job experience itself. Not all participants anticipated ending up in the nonprofit sector and some predicted they would not end their careers at a nonprofit. According to my findings, the primacy of mission over sector context or organizational role cannot be overstated.

Implications for other nonprofit crossover leaders. The central role of mission — whether identified early or discovered later — in the career progression of nonprofit crossover leaders can be instructive for leaders considering making a transition from the for-profit sector. As discussed in Chapter Six, awareness of mission correlated with the *self-awareness* component of authentic leadership theory. More than mere understanding of strengths and weaknesses that might emerge from performance evaluations, self-awareness is metacognition of how we make sense of the world and informs our perception of what role we want to play in life. Conscious awareness of mission is what focuses a nonprofit crossover leader in the myriad of career options

and serves as an evaluative tool for accepting promotions or job offers. Participants who discovered their sense of mission later on the career path had to come to terms with finding themselves in a dissatisfying field of work, at the top of the wrong career ladder, or making difficult — and perhaps unnecessary — self and family sacrifices. In their advice to others considering a sector switch, participants encouraged self-reflection to identify motives and expectations. As Dean counseled, "Know yourself, what makes you happy, what you enjoy doing… don't just flee a burning building and assume the nonprofit sector will have a better culture." Authentic leadership theorists and practitioners recognize the developmental opportunity available to leaders to learn more about themselves and their leadership by cultivating self-awareness through guided introspection and self-reflection. Doing the pre-work of articulating mission should be first on the potential nonprofit crossover leader's checklist.

Recommendations for nonprofit boards. Because mission is so central to the motivation of a nonprofit crossover leader, nonprofit boards should establish mission alignment as a key criterion when interviewing leaders coming from the for-profit sector for senior executive roles. Skill sets and leadership competencies also are important considerations, but an essential aspect of the crossover leader's motivation revolves around mission and should be at the forefront of their minds. Mia recommended potential crossover leaders request copies of organizational statements and strategic plans when interviewing, but nonprofit boards should put their mission at the forefront of their executive search process. Using this focus, ask candidates to describe their personal mission and how it aligns with the nonprofit's mission. Participants who understood the alignment between their personal mission and their organization's mission said it "feels right" and gave them a heightened sense of satisfaction and self-actualization.

Known or discovered, mission is a central part of nonprofit crossover leader motivation and therefore should be a critical factor in any nonprofit executive search process.

Prioritization of Points on an Internal Compass

The second theme related to motivation involved beliefs, values, and ethics that participants used to make sense of the world and their work in it. Participants were not specifically asked to describe their internal system of meaning and decision making, but it became clear through their stories that such a framework was in operation. This system corresponded with the second component of authentic leadership, *internalized moral perspective*, and the fourth component, *relational transparency*. Some participants identified religious teachings and ethical propositions that undergirded their decision to move toward the nonprofit sector. Others described family and work relationships as key points of influence. Because they used this internal framework to navigate into a nonprofit role, I organized this system as points on a compass, based on an image one of the participants used during his interview.

The four cardinal directions included fundamental elements indicated by all participants: *positive social impact*, *outcomes orientation*, *meaning over money*, and *self-efficacy*. Reinforcing the centrality of mission in the crossover leader experience, I assigned positive social impact the primary orienting position of north on the compass. Elements indicated by several participants formed the four ordinal points on the compass: *work relationships*, *family*, *new experiences*, and *integrity*. Altogether, the eight points of the internal compass generated from participant stories form a coherent framework of beliefs, values, and ethics that consciously or subconsciously guided participant approaches to determining meaning and direction for their career pathways toward the nonprofit sector.

Implications for other nonprofit crossover leaders. The points of the internal compass suggest another focus around which potential nonprofit crossover leaders could cultivate self-awareness. Such influences and factors often operate under the surface where they are unknown or unrecognized, causing inner conflict and discontent as it did for some participants. However, as described by authentic leadership theory, an internalized moral perspective also is what allows a person to self-regulate behavior. Consistent observable behavior is, in part, what earns respect from others and cultivates authentic followership, which theorists identified as an important factor of authentic leadership (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). An implication for current and future nonprofit crossover leaders is the importance of developing behavioral consistency by articulating an explicitly understood framework of beliefs, values, and ethics.

Another implication for current and future nonprofit crossover leaders is the strength of "not faking it" in leadership, which may run counter to the instinct of some leaders. Authentic leadership theory supported the participants' view that the best approach to leadership is not hiding who you are. Willingness to be who you are, to own gaps in knowledge, and to lead with strengths is central to relational transparency, maintaining positive work relationships, and acting with integrity. This transparent and strengths-based approach to leadership may not be an exclusive quality of nonprofit leadership, but characterized a core value of participants in my study.

Recommendations for nonprofit boards. The internal compass I constructed from the findings of my study may serve as a useful tool for nonprofit boards in two ways. First, as with the centrality of mission, the points on the compass could be used to generate relevant interview questions for candidates from the for-profit sector. Asking about positive social impact could

further draw out motivation for changing sectors. Other points on the compass could be used to develop questions that could reveal competencies, strengths, and experience.

Second, the internal compass provides a framework for providing ongoing support and development to the senior executive. Each point on the compass represents an aspect of the leadership experience valued by senior leaders. Participants indicated in their advice to other crossover leaders that one of their biggest challenges is having few, if any, peers who understand their perspective and context. The compass model may inform points of inquiry, whether for informal moments of support or more formally developed development plans. Establishing this level of understanding between boards and their organizational executives could strengthen partnership and enhance overall satisfaction and performance for leaders who otherwise feel like, as Dale expressed it, "fish out of water."

Understanding the Initial Crossover Leadership Experience

My interview questions began with a focus on participant career paths and motivation, but then shifted toward their actual experience with nonprofit leadership. They talked about their initial experiences, strategic priorities they championed, and comparisons between sectors. Some participants were somewhat new to the nonprofit sector, while others crossed sectors up to a decade earlier and were on their second nonprofit experience. The career pathway stories generally gave the impression that working in the nonprofit sector was a sensible next step, but the transition did not come without challenges and adaptations. Some participants described the experience in terms of "culture shock" requiring acclimation and, in some cases, re-posturing in order to become more effective in their roles. Two themes emerged in my findings: responses to sector differences and priorities of organizational change. I will briefly summarize the findings of these themes and offer implications and recommendations for each.

Responses to Sector Differences: Entry Posture

As with all change, crossing sectors from for-profit to nonprofit came with a period of adjustment for participants in my study. Some indicated in their recounting of initial experiences a higher level of readiness to adapt, some were caught off-guard by resistance they encountered and then adapted, and others stood firm through the differences to change the cultures of their nonprofits. Those who anticipated differences started with an entry posture of curiosity and flexibility, regarding the change as if it were a research experience to learn from and understand. Participants who faced turbulence from the differences in sectors had to take a step back to reassess their situation and adapt accordingly. While initially coming in "guns-a-blazing," they described moments of confusion followed by insight and re-posturing to find success in the changes they sought to implement. A third grouping of the participants adopted a firmer entry posture, knowing that change was needed — and in some cases was a board directive. Rather than adapting to their new environments, their initiatives changed their environments. The three postures have implications for other nonprofit crossover leaders and nonprofit boards.

Implications for other nonprofit crossover leaders. Some participants anticipated differences and positioned themselves to be curious and flexible at entry, while others were caught off-guard by the resistance they encountered in their nonprofits. This finding might suggest to other leaders considering switching sectors that the career change may be more "shocking" than they might expect. This might be particularly salient for those who bring skill sets and priorities related to the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017) discussed in Chapter Six. According to the experience and advice from participants, the purpose and goals of the structural frame may be countercultural for some nonprofit organizations. Determining whether

to adapt leadership posture or to adapt the environment is a situational decision for leaders and boards to make, ideally together.

Recommendations for nonprofit boards. The varied entry experiences of participants in the study should also be instructive for nonprofit boards considering hiring senior executives from the for-profit sector. If board intent is to bring substantive change to the organization, that should be a clear directive as it was for some participants. On the other hand, boards should be aware that nonprofit crossover executives might bring substantive change, regardless of board directive. Some of these leaders may need additional guidance or coaching on how to initiate and navigate these changes. Clear communication, support, and accountability should be in place to best support the efforts of crossover leaders. Attention should also be given to the specific priorities of change these leaders may initiate, which I address in the next section.

Priorities for Organizational Change

Regardless of explicit directive to do so, participants in the study initiated substantive change within the first one to two years of the start of their nonprofit tenure. I noted two types of organizational change in the findings: strategic priorities and personnel changes. Strategic priorities included marketing capacity, financial stability, technological improvements, operational excellence, performance management, and culture change. Boards were not exempt from the purview of nonprofit crossover leaders, becoming the focus of development and governance modifications for some participants. Findings from the interviews also included intentional organizational change in the area of personnel, which in some cases included significant turnover in senior management positions as well as across the organization on the staff level. Participants prioritized improving employee competency and capacity to improve

outcomes and organizational impact. Leaders frequently hired other people with for-profit backgrounds to help advance their strategic priorities.

      Implications for other nonprofit crossover leaders. According to the four-frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2017), people who can alternate between the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames are more successful and effective in their leadership because they have an ability to view situations through multiple perspectives. Participants in my study favored strategic initiatives that generally aligned with the structural frame of Bolman and Deal's (2017) four-frame theory of organizational leadership.

      However, their initiatives included at least one strategic emphasis in the human resource, political, and symbolic frames as well. Nonprofit crossover leaders should become aware of any default frame tendencies and develop abilities to reframe from other perspectives. For example, the political frame was arguably the least represented among strategic initiatives. This is interesting given participants described nonprofits as "way more political" than their former for-profit organizations.

      In their descriptions of initial experiences in the nonprofit sector as well as in their advice to other nonprofit crossover leaders, participants tended to be critical of a perceived nonprofit culture that generally aligns with the human resource frame. When participants in this study used elements of the human resource frame (Bolman and Deal, 2017), it was focused on fit between the people they hired and the roles they were hired to perform. This perspective is arguably still part of the structural frame of alignment, but certainly overlaps both frames. If the ability to reframe from multiple perspectives is a mark of leadership excellence, other nonprofit crossover leaders should critically reflect on contrarian approaches to their default style and, as

many participants in this study did, listen to voices of resistance to see deeper into the organization and its cultural norms — even if those norms become a strategic focus of change.

Recommendations for nonprofit boards. Similarly, the four-frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2017) is a tool that nonprofit boards should be knowledgeable about when hiring for senior executive roles. Targeted questions on examples of past strategic priorities from each of the four frames could help identify leadership preferences and indicate where candidates may complement and contrast with other leaders in the organization. The four-frames model also could serve as an evaluative tool for executive performance and development by highlighting perspectives or frames that are being neglected or underutilized in the leadership of the organization.

Organizational change often includes a reshuffling of staff and turnover is not an uncommon outcome. However, the significant employee turnover reported by some participants should give boards pause. Personnel change was common among most participant descriptions of their initial nonprofit experiences. In most cases, participants did not indicate this turnover was unwelcomed or viewed unfavorably once staffing changes stabilized. Dale acknowledged the challenge and "trauma" turnover brought to his organization. He had to assure the staff and board members alike that the end result would yield greater effectiveness in their mission. Even so, while causation cannot be established from this study, nonprofit boards should be aware that significant personnel changes might correlate with hiring executives from the for-profit sector. Further limitations of the current study will be discussed in the next section.

Recommendations for Nonprofit Leadership Programs

Participants in this study were selected for their experience in the for-profit sector prior to becoming nonprofit executives. Many had undergraduate or graduate education in business,

finance, or economics. Additionally, six of the eight participants had completed an MBA program. These career and educational experiences informed their leadership perspectives and contributed to the development of particular competencies and skill sets nonprofit boards and executives found valuable for the successful operation of their organizations. Educational institutions offering nonprofit leadership and management programs should consider the emerging trend of hiring nonprofit crossover leaders as they evaluate curriculum and targeted outcomes. If nonprofit organizations are increasingly looking for "the business perspective" to supplement the nonprofit mission, educational institutions should incorporate such components into their programs.

Interestingly, this recommendation is not without precedent and may reflect a trend in nonprofit management education. Historically, social work schools were the birthplace of many nonprofit management programs (Mirabella & Wish, 2000). However, the majority of programs developed within schools of public administration while the next largest set of programs originated independently of any particular discipline and maintains a multidisciplinary approach (Mirabella & Young, 2012). A more recent, though significant phenomenon is for nonprofit management programs to be housed in schools of business where they often take the form of social entrepreneurship concentrations (Mirabella & Young, 2012). The majority of nonprofit programs and courses are located outside of business schools (Table 5), but the influence of business schools and MBA programs on the nonprofit sector (Mirabella & Young, 2012) adds substance for exploring perceived need for business educated nonprofit leaders.

Table 5

Institutional Location of Undergraduate Nonprofit Management Programs by Year

Type	1996	2002	2006
Arts and sciences	9	13	23
Business	6	5	6
Business and public administration	0	2	1
Public affairs and administration	3	4	10
Other college or school	8	20	21

Note. Adapted from Dolch, Ernst, McClusky, Mirabella, & Sadow, 2007, p. 30.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendation for Future Research

Concerted effort was made to ensure validity, but there are limitations to the study. One limitation is the size of the participant sample. While gender and geographic representation was fairly balanced, the findings only represent the perspectives of eight nonprofit crossover leaders. Additionally, while demographic information like ethnic and cultural background and sexual orientation was not formally collected as part of the study, the majority of participants likely identify as white and only one participant self-identified as a gay male. Future research on nonprofit crossover leaders would benefit from a larger and more diverse sample of participants.

Another limitation of the study relates to the methodological approach selected, which was intended to develop a phenomenological understanding of nonprofit crossover leadership. While participants were asked to share organizational charts as part of their description of organizational changes, no attempt was made to assess or triangulate the effectiveness and impact of the changes they initiated. Data collection was limited to self-reporting from the perspective of the executive role. Additional studies on the effectiveness and impact of nonprofit

crossover leaders should take into consideration multiple views, including board members, direct reports, other employees, clients or people served by the organization, and other stakeholders.

Finally, findings and representations of the data are limited to the perspectives of the participants. The internal compass model was derived from participant responses and did not include an opportunity for participants to react to the compass representation of their beliefs, values, and ethics. Some contend member checking is an important feature of qualitative design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Usher and Jackson (2014) noted the practice "has generated debate in the literature and summarized counter-arguments (p. 192). Future research could be conducted to validate the eight points among a wider representation of nonprofit crossover leaders. Similarly, the analysis of the four-frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2017) was limited to the responses participants voluntarily shared about strategic initiatives they prioritized in their initial tenure as nonprofit leaders. A more robust assessment of nonprofit crossover leader priorities could reveal greater variety of representation among the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames. A confirmed tendency to favor the structural frame could lead to a deeper understanding of nonprofit crossover leadership and the implications of their perspectives.

Future research also could be designed to better use the conceptual frames considered in Chapter Two. Lincoln's (1989) sociological framework for analyzing taxonomies and anomaly may produce insightful understanding into the trend of hiring nonprofit crossover leaders beyond what the scope of my research was able to assess. Similarly, while the concepts of continuity, growth, and interaction of Dewey's (1997) theory of experience had overlap with the authentic leadership and the four-frames model, a more education-focused study of nonprofit crossover

leadership could yield more specific recommendations for nonprofit leadership and management programs and trainings.

Conclusion

This study on nonprofit crossover leadership contributes to an understanding of sector switching in three ways. First, it builds on the qualitative work of other doctoral students who studied leaders that crossed from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector (Camp, 2005; Goebelbecker, 2008) by seeking to identify a comprehensive picture of nonprofit crossover leadership, focusing on both the person and the experience of switching sectors through a leadership lens.

Second, this study adds to the wider literature (practitioner, dissertation, and published scholarship) on the topic of sector switching. After three decades, it still remains largely under-researched. As lines between the sectors continue to blur because of economic and generational drivers, understanding the meaning of the experience — for leaders and for their organizations — will only become more important.

Third, this study expanded my own understanding of sector switching. Crossing sectors is a unique career experience and its significance cannot be overestimated. Having worked in the nonprofit, private, and public sectors, I know firsthand the challenges and advantages of cross-sector perspectives. I now have a deeper understanding based on shared experiences with others who have crossed sectors.

It is my hope that other researchers will shed more light on the practice and experience of sector switching. Crossing sectors is as much an internal process as it is external. For that reason, surface observations and comparisons will always be inadequate to understand what it means. There is more of the story to tell.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Perception of Sectors and Leadership: Advice to Other Crossover Leaders

Toward the end of each interview, I asked participants if they had any advice to share with other leaders considering making the transition from the for-profit sector to a nonprofit organization. Responses ranged from general career advice to encouragement and caution about crossing sectors. More than a collection of wisdom, their responses formed another vantage point of the crossover experience. I organized their responses into two sections. The first section, "Sage Advice," contained an emphasis on self-knowledge, sacrifice, and rewards of switching to the nonprofit sector. The second section reflects sector-specific observations they made and wanted others to know ahead of crossing over. I include them as an appendix to the study as supplemental understanding of the data and for those who are looking to gain further insight — out of general curiosity or because of specific consideration of switching from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector.

Sage Advice

The first theme found in the participants' advice to others is best characterized as general wisdom, or "sage advice." These statements and concepts focus on self-knowledge and consideration of the costs, as well as the rewards, of pursing a career shift across sectors. This collection of the advice could be abstracted for any career shift, whether or not into a nonprofit role. However, what emerges from the advice is a view that crossing sectors is a journey into something new. This perspective aligns with the career stories they told at the beginning of their interviews.

When Dean announced to his for-profit colleagues he was leaving for a nonprofit, most responded "really, really positively." While some were surprised he would give up an esteemed

corporate position, others responded with admiration. "Many were admiring that I had the courage to make that change," admitting they had "similar feelings in their own search for a deeper fulfillment," but "were just too locked into that corporate ladder." In line with his spiritual quest to find the intersection of his greatest passion and the world's greatest need, Dean's advice was to "Know yourself, what makes you happy, what you enjoy doing." At the same time, he cautioned, "It's still a job," so "don't just flee a burning building and assume the nonprofit sector will have a better culture."

Reed said he is frequently asked for advice by others "who have seen my career path and have wanted to follow it." His answer is to "Always lead with your strength." Based on his own experience of transitioning into a field he had little knowledge of, he advised to focus on what can be contributed confidently, even while gaining understanding of a new context. Doing so establishes credibility.

> You are going to be learning a new environment. That's your weakness. You may not know the sector that you are entering into. You've got to give them something to get your foot in so that you can start to move forward.

Benita made a similar observation about her crossover experience into a very skeptical culture at her first nonprofit. "You always were under the looking glass with somebody or something, so the whole time I was there I think I was being evaluated." While this skepticism was in part because of her corporate background, she also attributed it to the fact that she was a woman in a historically male-dominated organization and had to confront overt sexism. One executive colleague told her, "I was really skeptical about having a female around this executive table, but you're really smart." In that environment, she had to "build credibility around the table" by leading well. Not long after she started, her CEO asked her, "Have you noticed how

they're all starting to copy you?" As with Reed, Benita found leading with her strength allowed

her to contribute positively and build credibility while learning a new organization and field.

Shalene echoed the balance in Dean's advice as well as the strengths-based focus offered

by Reed and Benita. She began her advice by admonishing other crossover leaders about

knowing the reason they were considering a nonprofit. "You have to be passionate about the

cause." Then, drawing on her own experience, she emphasized the importance of making a

contribution in a field that might be outside of their background. "You aren't coming here to be

fulfilled; you are coming here to offer something." For her, that was not to join them in their

specialized work, but to "help set this up so that the employees have a great place to work in

order to provide the service that they can."

In addition to knowing oneself and leading with strengths, participants offered counsel on

counting the costs of crossing sectors. In particular, they discussed the lower compensation.

Robby stated it outright. If you are expecting to make a lot of money, "this isn't going to do it."

Dale facetiously agreed, "Yes, you can make money in a nonprofit. Just make sure you do your

homework and understand how little it is." While still counting the costs, Brad found a tradeoff

between lower compensation and an organizational culture that was more forgiving. "What I

gave up in money and resources, I traded for time and patience." When asked if others should

consider making the switch, despite all the challenges, Benita was quick to respond with

encouragement. "Do it. The rewards will be well worth it."

Participants were prepared to share advice for others considering crossing sectors. In

some cases, sharing advice was already a regular part of their crossover experience as others

sought them out to hear their stories. The advice the participants shared with me also contained

observations they had made on the differences between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.

Sector-Specific Observations

In addition to sage advice about crossing sectors along the career pathway, participants shared what they observed about differences between for-profit and nonprofit organizations. They underscored that nonprofits are not easy, in terms of the effort required as well as the shift in culture and the limitation of resources. They explained that the challenges of the nonprofit environment make "fit" all the more important.

Benita advised, "Don't underestimate the challenge. Nonprofits are not a low-key, ease into retirement career option." She described the staff members at her current nonprofit as "very hardworking" and the organization as "rather busy… with just a lot going on all the time." While Benita depicted her nonprofit work environment as "work hard, play hard," Dean summated his experience at a nonprofit as "work pretty hard and know that you're doing good work." He observed less competitiveness in nonprofit culture, as did Brad and Robby. At the same time, Dean made clear that the work is not easy. "I think some people have the misconception that this is going to be a cakewalk. This can be a very difficult job."

Compounding the difficulty of the nonprofit experience for crossover leaders, participants observed differences in organizational culture between for-profits and nonprofits. Dale found the pace of change to be notably slower and counseled other crossovers to be ready for it. "I know you know it is going to be slower, but take how slow you think it's going to go to make change happen and double it, maybe triple it." In his experience, the capacity of the organization was in constant need of address and his staff had to understand why change was necessary. "Three years into it… I was amazed at how much I still have to teach. Always teaching, always teaching. Always giving context. Always telling why." Dean also reflected the importance of creating context when he observed nonprofits were rarely "command-and-

control" environments. "The ability to speak to both hearts and minds is important, to be able to maximize your influence in a role where you don't necessarily have authority over various different stakeholders."

Benita elaborated further with advice on the nature of nonprofits, which she described as being "very social and relational." She explained that compared to for-profits, nonprofits are "way more political… way more social." Her advice to other corporate crossovers includes awareness of the "sociology" of the organization. "I always tell people when I hire them that there's a sociology they need to learn about." She explained it is more than a company, it is about society, religion, and economics "and you have to figure out how to blend the whole thing together."

Other participants agreed that the difference in culture between for-profits and nonprofits was a challenge. Robby cautioned, "You have to prepare yourself. It's quite a shock." He and Dale speculated that the differences are more with the size of the organization than whether it is for-profit or nonprofit. According to Dale, anything less than 75 employees probably will not have the resources and capacity to handle the processes a corporate executive would like to initiate. In his estimation, "300 might be optimal" for the number of employees a crossover executive might prefer, in terms of having adequate resources, management support, and overall "sophistication" of operational processes, including finance, accounting, human resources, development, sales, operations, and marketing. He said, for-profit executives are "used to working through their managers" on people issues and might be surprised that those managers are not there or do not have the ability to help navigate the issues. "The chess pieces on the board that you're used to seeing, [that] you'd like to move around… the organization won't have the money or the need to utilize it."

Given the challenges, culture differences, and limited resources, finding the right match between the executive and a nonprofit is especially critical. Mia emphasized the importance of "fit" between the leader and the organization, recommending getting a clear understanding of the mission and vision — even the strategic plan — ahead of time in order to learn about the organization as part of matching yourself to the right one. Robby warned about knowing the history of the organization, its assets, public perception of it, and what needs to happen to move it forward. While he acknowledged it is true of any job, having this knowledge can help you understand "where you think you could take it" and "what it could accomplish under your leadership."

A final and sobering piece of advice came from Dale on the loneliness of being a nonprofit crossover leader. My question on who he considers mentors left him briefly stumped. He referenced having coaches and counselors, but concluded that there really are not mentors to be found. While this is often a general lament of CEOs who sometimes express being alone at the top, there is something unique about nonprofit crossover leaders that can be even more alienating. "Even when I go to the circle of nonprofit leaders, CEOs… I'm a little bit of a fish out of water because they don't talk the same language I do…. A mentor doesn't exist."

Taken together, the participants' advice suggests that crossing sectors is more than just a job change. Crossing sectors involves introspection of motivation, consideration of one's best contribution, understanding of the unique nature of nonprofit cultures, as well as the challenges and limitations of working in them. Those who are contemplating making the switch are advised by the participants to do it, but to do so with full assessment of who they are, what they bring, and what they can expect when they get there.

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Crossover Leadership as Anomaly and Educational Experience

IRB Log Number: 775086-1

I am conducting a study about the experience of nonprofit leaders who transitioned from for-profit sector careers. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because of my awareness of your career profile from our personal or professional connection or by reference from another participant or mutual connection. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Daniel A. Stirratt under advisement of Dr. Sarah Noonan in the Leadership, Policy, and Administration Department.

Background Information and Purpose of Study:
The absence of substantive research on the shifting trend of sector switching leaves nonprofit crossover leaders and their receiving organizations in the dark. At stake is not fully understanding ahead of time what a crossover executive hire means for the leader's professional development or the impact on the organization. My research seeks to answer the questions: How do crossover leaders apply and adapt their prior for-profit work experience and knowledge in a nonprofit setting? How is their leadership received by stakeholders in their organizations? How does switching from the for-profit sector to the nonprofit sector impact crossover leaders and the organizations they lead? To address this question, I will interview 10-12 nonprofit leaders who transitioned from the for-profit sector to learn about their experience and their perceived response of the organization. Results from this research will benefit career development researchers and practitioners, leaders who switched sectors or are considering switching sectors, nonprofit board members, and may also be of interest to directors and faculty of early and mid-career nonprofit management programs.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: Provide me with an electronic copy of a positional organization chart (titles only or private, identifying information removed) of your senior leaders and any other positions reporting directly to you so I can better understand your work context prior to the interview. I will ask you some general questions about their demographic, work, and educational backgrounds during the interview. I would like to conduct the interview at your office location to get a better sense of context for your work, but would be happy to arrange to meet at another location or to conduct the interview via video or phone call if preferable. The interview should only last 60-90 minutes. I will record the interview in order to accurately transcribe your responses for analysis. Any follow up to the interview for additional information or clarification will be conducted by email unless you request an in-person or phone conversation instead.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you or your organization in any way. The types of records I will create could include audio or video recordings of interviews, written transcripts, field notes, and a master list of participants. I will retain the recording of our interview for two years after I complete my project and then will delete it. I will also destroy any printed transcriptions, documents, or written notes at that point, though I request permission to retain electronic versions indefinitely (<u>initial below</u>). Those files will be password protected on my computer, which is also password protected. Only I know those passwords and have access to the computer.

_____ I grant permission to the researcher to retain electronic versions of interview transcriptions, documents, or written notes indefinitely for future reference and use.

Risks, Compensation, and Benefits
There are no anticipated risks for taking part in this study. Though no compensation will be offered for participating in this study, many people find the reflective nature of qualitative interviews to be extremely beneficial to their leadership development and focus.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is <u>entirely voluntary</u>. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until the dissertation is submitted to my committee for approval. <u>To withdraw from the study, you may email your request and reason for withdrawing to my UST account: stir075@stthomas.edu</u>. Should you decide to withdraw, I will remove your data from my dissertation and delete all printed and electronic records immediately. During the interview, <u>you are free to ask to skip any questions</u> you do not feel comfortable answering.

Contacts and Questions
My name is Dan Stirratt. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 952-250-7703 or my advisor Dr. Sarah Noonan at (651) 962-4897. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6035 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. I grant the researcher permission to make an audio recording of this interview.

_____   _____
Signature of Study Participant   **Date**

_____
Print Name of Study Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   **Date**

Appendix C

Initial Contact Email

Dear Nonprofit Leader:

I would like to invite you to participate in a doctoral research project I am conducting through the University of St. Thomas. I am investigating the experiences of nonprofit executives who transitioned from for-profit sector careers within the past 5 years. Candidates with an earned MBA is preferred, but not required.

According to my initial research, nonprofit boards are increasingly looking to leaders from the private sector to head their organizations. My goal is to learn more about the experience of leaders that cross sectors, particularly the learning experience as knowledge, skills, and abilities are applied in a different organizational context. Results of this research could be of great value for leadership development models and for the nonprofit sector overall.

Qualifying participants will be invited to schedule a 60-90 minute, in-person interview at their office location (or another agreed upon private location) and to share a positional organization chart (titles only) of their senior leaders and direct reports to provide context for the interview and analysis. The records of this study will be kept confidential and secure. Participants and their organizations will not be identified in order to maintain anonymity throughout the process and final reporting.

Thank you for considering being part of this project.

Sincerely,
Dan Stirratt
EdD Candidate
University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, MN
stir0725@stthomas.edu

Appendix D

Interview Questions

Interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, but included some of the following questions:

Demographics/Background

1. Tell me a little about your career background. What did you do prior to coming to this organization?

2. What is your educational background?

3. Can I ask how old you are?

Transition from Business to Nonprofit

4. Tell me about your decision to shift from a for-profit to a nonprofit leadership role. What led you to make the leap from the corporate world? Why this particular organization?

5. What did you hear other business leaders or peers say about your decision?

6. How did you feel about making the decision?

First Year Experience

7. How would you describe your reception by organizational stakeholders:

- Board members

- Other staff

- Volunteers

- Donors

- Client population

Was there resistance from any of these groups?

8. When you first started, what were your initial priorities for the organization? How did you determine those priorities? Have those priorities changed since then? Why?

9. What would you say were your greatest achievements in that first year?

10. What challenges did you face? Were you surprised you or do you expect these challenges? Why?

11. What skill sets did you bring in that proved to be invaluable to what the NP needed when you were first hired? Is that different today?

12. What skill sets did you find you needed to learn/hone during your first year?

13. Looking back, is there anything you wish you could do over in order to do it better or differently?

Perceived Differences Between For-Profit and Nonprofit

14. Having experienced both, what would you say are some difference and similarities between for-profit business and nonprofit organizations?

15. What kind of formal education do you think is important for upcoming nonprofit leaders to have? Are there specific areas of study you think would be especially valuable?

16. What advise would you give to someone else who was thinking about making the transition from for-profit to nonprofit? Do you know anyone else who has made this same transition or is considering it?