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What's So Different About Making a Difference?! Transforming the Discourse of Worklife and Career

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WHAT'S SO DIFFERENT ABOUT MAKING A DIFFERENCE?!

TRANSFORMING THE DISCOURSE OF WORKLIFE AND CAREER

A Dissertation Presented

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father, Abraham Woolf (1907-1995). Throughout my adulthood, he persistently urged me to take a break from life and pursue a doctorate. It didn't matter to him in what field, so long as I got that terminal degree. Even after I had started a family and my professional career was flourishing, he offered to support me for however long it took. I consistently resisted his fatherly encouragement, as sons tend to do. Now, sixteen years after his passing, I honor him for being right about how much the process would enrich my own life and how much it would offer me the potential to enrich the lives of others. Over the past six years, my Dad's memory has been my rock-steady conscience to stick with it -- and I am glad that I did. This dissertation is his blessing that I now share with the world.

In memory of Bo (2000-2010), my personal "man's best friend," who doggedly supported me with his unconditional love. Our daily walks together in the woods gave rise to many of the ideas embedded in this work. He came into our lives at a time when he was needed most; and when his purpose on earth was completed, he passed on. I miss him dearly.

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they willingly followed my lines of inquiry even if it meant sharing very personal accounts of their lives (from earliest childhood fears, to current professional concerns); and they spoke eloquently and passionately about the things they care about in their work and careers in the nonprofit service sector. Their anecdotes provided a rich tapestry of data from which I could glean important findings and analysis. I thank them for entrusting me with their life stories -- a very special and personal contribution to me and this work.

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ABSTRACT

WHAT'S SO DIFFERENT ABOUT MAKING A DIFFERENCE?!

TRANSFORMING THE DISCOURSE OF WORKLIFE AND CAREER

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This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of five individuals who shifted their work and career from the business world to the nonprofit service sector. Through in-depth personal accounts, I show how the research participants made sense of "work" and "career" as they moved through, and after they completed the transition out of the business setting; and the degree to which their subjective experiences in the nonprofit work environment transformed their prior perspectives on "work life" and "career" that had been shaped by their experiences in the business world.

According to the literature of *subjective career development* (how people shape their personal identity through their work over a lifetime) and *transformative learning* (how people change their worldview perspective to accommodate significant changes in their life circumstances), people who shift from business careers to nonprofit jobs are likely to be confounded by certain realities in the nonprofit world that cannot be readily understood or explained through past experience in the business workplace. The real-life personal stories of five such career shifters manifest clear differences in the "discourse of work and career" across the two sectors, resulting in an apparent disorienting paradox between the profit-driven "business mindset" (where the fundamental motivation is survival of the enterprise and objective personal advancement) and the mission-driven "nonprofit worldview" (where the fundamental motivation is service for a better world and subjective personal meaning-making). An analysis of these paradoxes of discourse suggests that the mission-driven nonprofit discourse ("we work for a better world") offers a valuable and constructive counterpoint to the more dominant enterprise-driven business discourse ("we work to sustain the company") that pervades the organizational landscape of our society.

The implications of these findings as reviewed in the last chapter are significant for policy, practice and research in both nonprofit management and business organizational development. The work concludes with the suggestion that the nonprofit mindset opens the possibility for re-orienting one's "career" to a life-long process of self-actualization, where one works to find meaning and purpose through making a difference toward improving quality of life for a better world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

> "... when I told my family and friends I had gotten a job working for a nonprofit organization, I could hear them thinking, "That sounds like Susan; she's a warm, fuzzy do-gooder type." And even I thought I'd be joining a less money-driven and more human-focused, supportive work environment. What I learned from that career move was that many people's perceptions of working for a nonprofit are naïve at best." (Bryant, 2007, first paragraph).

Statement of the Problem

Recent literature, both academic and popular (see below), assert or hint at a trend that is taking place in the U.S. workplace: people who work in the for-profit business world are increasingly shifting their career and work interests to the nonprofit service sector. While no direct hard data seems available to document that such a shift is actually occurring, psychometric research (e.g. Princeton Survey Research Associates International, 2005), and case studies (e.g. The Bridgespan Group, Inc., 2005) suggest that many people, especially older Americans (age 50-70), are very interested in making a work shift to the nonprofit sector. In addition, nonprofit advocacy organizations (e.g. www.boardsource.org), popular management books (e.g. King, 2000), and the media (e.g. Perry, 2005; Freedman, 2005; Gutner, 2005) imply that the trend has already begun.

As Bryant (2007) reports, transition to and assimilation into the nonprofit working world can be personally challenging and fraught with jarring realities for someone coming from the for-profit sector. Fundamental beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, skills, relationships, style of working, and even personal motivations appear to be different across the two sectors (Stein, 2002; Wilensky and Hansen, 2001). Patterns, habits, perspectives and orientations that work well in the for-profit world may not apply as readily in the nonprofit setting (Collins, 2005). As well, the

nonprofit work ethic may appear to be less rigorous, rewards systems less acknowledging, and the culture surprisingly unwelcoming (Bryant, 2007).

Given the apparent likelihood of such challenges, the career changer making the shift from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector is likely to experience a certain (if not significant) degree of discomfort and distress (Bryant, 2007). People in these situations may start questioning their ability to be effective in the workplace (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Inkson, 2007); they may feel out of place (Hall, 2002); or things around them may no longer make sense (Cohen, et al, 2004). In essence, they may experience a degree of "culture shock" (Stein, 2002; Ward, et al, 2001; Zapf, 1991).

In sum, people who shift their career focus from for-profit to nonprofit work are often confounded by certain realities of life in the nonprofit world that cannot be readily understood or explained through past experience in the for-profit workplace. They may have difficulty making meaning of the situation they are in; and they may feel that their sense of personal identity is being compromised. Such identifiable personal impacts and adjustment(s) appear to be taking place as these people engage with their new life in the nonprofit sector.

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation reports on research that studies the lived experiences of five individuals with prior *careers* in the *for-profit business world* who shifted their work focus to the *nonprofit service sector*. Through the stories they tell of their *career transition*, we learn about the *personally challenging impacts* that arose as a result of the differences between the two sectors. The personal accounts of *career changers* helps us understand if and how they *made sense* of those differences, and the analysis of their narratives should help others who make similar career changes, so that they will be better prepared when faced with similar impacts they experience in their own lives.

Research Questions

Given the purpose of this study described above, the following three questions formed the basis of this research:

1. **How do people from the for-profit world become aware of and deal with the differences they experience when they shift their work and career focus to the nonprofit sector?**
   The research explores the differences reported by the study participants; how those differences manifest; how the differences are described; and what impact(s), if any, the differences have had on the study participants (as reported by them).

2. **How do the study participants deal with (i.e. respond to) the impacts of the differences?**
   The research explores if and how study participants were motivated to address and resolve the differences; if they took actions to reconcile or resolve the differences; and the degree to which the differences are described as being resolved or reconciled.

3. **As a result of their experience of this process, what changes, if any, do the study participants report with respect to their beliefs, viewpoints, and behaviors (i.e. What learning takes place during this process)?**
   The research explores the changes that people report: in their view of Self; in their belief systems; and in their responses, behaviors, and actions in connection with their work and career.

Significance of the Study: Who Will Find this Research of Value

I have identified two areas of significance for of this study. First, from a *practical point of view*, I believe that this research will have great application and strategic value to several professional segments. As shown in Table 1, potential career changers from the for-profit world can use this research to ease their transition into the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit organizations can use this information to assure that career changers will be more effective as they transition into leadership roles in the nonprofit sector. Corporations will benefit by being able to support employees who are considering a career change. Higher education institutions can design more effective training programs for career changers. Financial planners will be able to develop tools for their clients considering career changes. And life/career coaches will benefit by having information that form the basis for effective life planning strategies.

Table 1.1
Professional segments who should benefit from this research

Segment	Benefit of the research
For-profit professionals	Facilitates a smoother personal transition for career changers to the non-profit sector.
Nonprofit fields	Creates resilient workers and leaders out of those making the shift from the for-profit sector to nonprofit fields.
Corporations	Offers more fulfilling possibilities for employee work-life balance programs; supports early retirement and/or outplacement initiatives for older employees.
Higher education institutions	Points the way to new baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate professional programs and certification opportunities.
Financial planning (FP) community	Provides better "life planning" tools for FP professionals; new opportunities for FP clients.
Life/career coaching community	Offers better understanding of career transition issues.

Second, from a *scholarly point of view*, following a review of current literature and primary research studies on the subject of those who have changed careers from the for-profit to the nonprofit world, it appears that little or no research has been conducted as yet where the *subjective experience* of the for-profit to nonprofit career changer (i.e. the personal experience of the individual) has been the primary and exclusive unit of analysis. In preparing this dissertation, I contacted several of the people and organizations responsible for the studies (such as Bridgestar and Stein) who agreed that a focus on the experience of the individual will contribute to the body of research that has been conducted to date on career changers from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector.

Assumptions

Several assumptions underlie this research study:

Cultural Context

"Work", "career", and "learning" as defined in this study all occur in a sociocultural context, and people of all societies and cultures engage in these three activities. However, because (a) the literature reviewed for this study on these topics applies primarily to the industrialized nations of North America, the United Kingdom, and Europe (Asian examples tend to be accompanied by references to cultural differences), and (b) the *nonprofit sector* as described in this study applies primarily to the collection of certain organizational entities and types located exclusively in the United States (see "Definitions") , it is therefore assumed that any generic references in this study to individuals (as in, *"People* who have shifted their career…") applies to a sociocultural context of the United States. While this work might apply to other the sociocultural contexts, such application should not be assumed

Dominance of the For-profit Discourse

As the reader will note in this work, the discourse of the for-profit business world with regard to "work," "career," and "organization" dominates the literature of the nonprofit world. In essence, *business* is the taken-for-granted baseline against which the nonprofit world is to be compared, contrasted, and measured. This contextual assumption (that the business world is "known" and that the nonprofit world is "not known") pervades not only the literature of nonprofit organizational development (see Chapter 2), but also the language of those who work in those worlds (see Chapters 4 and 5).

"Nonprofit ideology": Taking a Critical Stance

This research assumes that indeed differences do exist between the for-profit and nonprofit work environments, and for those people who change their careers from the for-profit to the nonprofit sectors, those differences will not only be noticed, but they will also have been

experienced as personally challenging. However, the assumption of a dominant for-profit discourse will likely set the stage for the further assumption of a critical stance by this research regarding a certain taken-for-granted nonprofit "ideology" -- one that is derived from the for-profit discourse -- that suggests how non-profits *ought* to be structured, and how they *ought* to behave. In this critical context, one objective of this research will be to explore the degree to which any perceived problematic "differences" between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors are actually manifestations of the dominant for-profit discourse being contradicted.

Career Stage

This research assumes that the individuals who participate in the study already will have made the shift from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector (i.e. this research is not concerned with people who have not yet made the shift, even if they may be thinking about it, or expecting to be making such a shift at some future point in time). The research further assumes the career changers in question will have worked previously in the for-profit sector for a sufficient enough period of time so as to have demonstrated their prior commitment to the values and norms of commercial enterprises (i.e. they formerly identified themselves as having a career in the for-profit sector); and that the career changers in question will have been working in the nonprofit environment for a sufficient enough period of time so as to have experienced any differences between the two sectors that might have become personally challenging. NOTE: I will *not* assume that the career changers will remain in the nonprofit sector for the rest of their careers, or indeed, for any specific length of time; at some point, they may return to the for-profit sector.

Stage of Adult Development

Given the career assumptions described above, this research further assumes that the people to be included in the study will be mid to late-career professionals in their personal mid- to late-life (45 +) years, or even near, at, or past the start of their retirement years. Their professional experience is likely to be at the managerial level, and as such, they are probably members of the upper middle class. This assumption is based on the literature of adult

development that suggests that a higher order and more complex capacity of making meaning about work, career, and life emerges only later in life. According to Kegan (1994), mastering such complexity (what he calls the *fourth order of consciousness*) "is more a matter of a gradual process of holistic mental growth or transformation -- the evolution of consciousness -- than of mastering new mental skills" (Keegan, 1994, page 187).

Conscious and forthcoming involvement by research participants

This work assumes that the career changers who participate in the interviews for this study speak honestly and freely about, and share candidly with me the stories of (a) their experiences as they transitioned, (b) the impacts they experienced as they made the transition, and (c) whatever actions they took to address those impacts.

Definitions

The vocabulary of this research encompasses the following definitions of key words and phrases:

- **Career** is a pattern or sequence of work and employment experiences over time, including both objective aspects of employment (e.g. salary, position, roles, command of resources, location, hours of work, etc.), as well as subjective experience of those circumstances (ambitions, hopes and expectations, sense of fulfillment or success, etc.) (taken from Inkson, 2007).
- Within the definition of career, the notion of a **career change** or **career shift** is ascribed to the completion or conclusion of one pattern or sequence of work and employment experience, and the beginning of a new pattern or sequence of work and employment. Such career changes include objective work-related change (new role, employer, field or profession, etc.) and subjective experience of work-related change (new personal orientation or perspective, emotional reactions, feelings, etc.) (Louis, 1980).

- A **career transition** "suggests both a [career] change and a period during which the change takes place... the period during which an individual is either changing roles (taking on a different objective role) or changing orientation to a role already held (altering a subjective state)" (Louis, 1980, page 330).
- **Career changer** is the term I use to describe someone who has made a career transition from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector.
- The **for-profit world** is comprised of organized activities whose distinguishing purpose is to generate a financial return to those who own them or who participate in producing their products and services. It should be noted that the dominant discourse of enterprise and organizational management in the United States is rooted in the so-called for-profit "corporate" world. It is not the purpose of this research to elaborate a more detailed definition of "for-profit", as it is assumed that readers of this work share a common, taken-for-granted understanding of "the business world" and its organizations.
- **Nonprofit service sector** is the field of private (non-governmental) organized activities commonly characterized as philanthropic, charitable, community betterment, mission-driven, public-benefit serving, voluntary, tax-exempt, etc. in areas of service such as education, health care, social and human services, arts, humanities, culture and recreation, community and economic development, sustainability of the natural and built environment, public advocacy, human rights, etc. (see Hodgkinson, et al 1989, pp. 4-8; Hammack and Young, 1993, pp. xvii,1; Powell and Steinberg, 2006, pp. 1-4, 32, 94-95, 32, 118; Stein, 2002, pp. 9-10). The type and nature of goods and services provided is not the sole defining characteristic of a nonprofit organization; indeed, many commercial for-profit enterprises provide offerings that promote public well-being or serve the common good (for examples, certain hospitals, educational institutions, and consulting firms). Nor do organizational characteristics necessarily define a nonprofit. Nonprofit

organizations and for-profit businesses share many characteristics in terms of management, leadership, administrative style and approach, etc. Only two technical features truly distinguish nonprofit organized activities from private for-profit companies, both of which are structural/regulatory in nature. First, nonprofit organizations "are prohibited [by law] from distributing any profits they may generate to those who control or support them", and second, by regulation, they "are generally exempted from federal, and often from state and local, taxation on grounds that they serve some public purpose" (Salamon, 2003, pp. 7-8).

- **Differences** faced by the career changer will likely manifest in two flavors: **objective differences** are those dissimilarities in the participants' external environment manifested as circumstances, situations, behaviors, artifacts, cultural norms, etc. (e.g. differences in pay scales, physical workplace, rules and regulations, dress code, etc.). **Subjective differences** are the participants' experiences and feelings resulting from objective differences (for example, level of feeling accepted, being clear about what to do, stress, self-esteem, satisfaction, fulfillment, etc.).
- **Making sense** is a conscious or deliberate process of making explicit, giving form or establishing purposefulness to something. The "something" might be an action, item, relationship, circumstance or situation, idea or thought, or belief or value. Making sense is particularly relevant to situations where the "something" in question is experienced as surprising, discrepant, or not fitting one's expectations. In such cases, "making sense" serves to account for the unexpected, by seeking ways to integrate that something into some perception of reality, or personal identity, whether previously formed or newly developed (generally taken from Weick, 1995). In another sense, we make sense so as "to establish order among unrelated or conflicting information" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 216).

- **Personally challenging impacts** in the context of this study**,** are certain subjective effects that a person experiences in reaction to external conditions that don't make sense (i.e. that don't fit expectations -- see definition of "making sense" above). Such impacts result not from the condition in itself (which objectively is just "the condition"), but from a jarring of sensibilities because "incoming stimuli do not match familiar patterns" (Zapf, 1991, p. 106). "Culture shock" may be a good synonym to characterize personally challenging impacts. While traditionally connoting only significant negative experiences, the contemporary understanding of "culture shock" broadly encompasses "how people feel, behave, think and perceive when exposed to second-culture influences" (Ward at al, 2001, page 270). In situations of this kind, when perspectives based on previous experience do not serve to make sense of a current situation, they create "a problematic frame of reference" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20).
- For the purposes of this study, the term **discourse** is defined in the context of the scholarship of *organizational discourse and communication:*

  Organization scholars invoke the terms "discourse" and "communication", sometimes interchangeably, to reference a variety of phenomena spanning language, speech, talk, conversation, non-verbal behavior, mundane interaction storytelling and narrative, public rhetoric, mediated messages, cultural representation, etc.… as a (semi-)coherent system of representation that crafts a context for language use – – that is, a (loosely) affiliated set of metaphors, images, stories, statements, meanings, and so forth that generate a particular and socially recognizable version of people, things, and events. (Ashcroft, 2006, pp10-11).

I should note that this study does not use the term "discourse" in a critical context to represent the hegemony of one culture over others (as in the *dominance of corporate discourse).* This study is not intended to be critical or an indictment of the ubiquitous and overwhelming presence of corporate discourse in the nonprofit sector. Rather, the more generic definition of discourse (as a *representation of a culture*) perfectly suits the conceptual framework on which this study is based; namely, the theory of transformative learning whereby adults, when confronted with new and dramatically different life circumstances and situations are able to transform previously

unconscious or taken-for-granted perspectives and worldviews (i.e. "discourse") in order to be more functional in their new world.

Overview of this work

The ***conceptual framework*** of this work is built on three lines of theoretical scholarship for which a ***literature review*** is provided in Chapter 2:

> *Theories of nonprofit organizational development* suggest that career changers are likely to face differences between the for-profit business world and the nonprofit service sector that will cause them a degree of personal consternation;
>
> *Subjective career theory* suggests that career changers will be challenged by the difficulty they will experience making meaning of things that are new and different in their work life and career.
>
> *Transformative learning theory* explains both why career changers might experience the differences they encountered between the for-profit and nonprofit worlds as "challenges," and how they might be able to address those challenges in order to find themselves in a state of greater satisfaction and effectiveness within their new nonprofit work environment.

The ***research design and method*** described in Chapter 3 explains why and how a qualitative *approach*, a *phenomenological methodology*, a *narrative (storytelling) method* and *in-depth interviews* were used to explore the lived personal experience of a participant sample of five individuals who had shifted their work and career from the business world to the nonprofit service sector.

Results of the interviews are reviewed in Chapter 4. I note that when the research participants shifted their work from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector, they experienced a fundamental change in, if not transformation of their personal orientation to work life, from a priority focus on the enterprise (i.e. company), to a clearer priority where *service to people and the quality of life of place* became more meaningful and purposeful motivators for work and career. As the participants crossed the threshold into the nonprofit sector, they found that their experience of certain circumstances in the nonprofit world were, in fact, different from what their prior experience in the business world had conditioned them to expect. These experiences began

to evoke for them a discrete *nonprofit mindset* which I characterize as a *subjective identity* (both internal/self-perceived and external/public) of *personal difference-making, meaning making,* and *fulfillment* in connection with their work and career that is rooted in the larger mission-context of the organizations for which they worked.

Chapter 5 extends the ***analysis of data*** through a series of eleven "Vignettes of Experience" -- reflective verbal expressions of the research participants -- to explore and analyze more deeply whether or not the subjective identity that was evoked when the research participants encountered "different" circumstances in their nonprofit world was dramatic enough to characterize as a transformation of their discourse regarding work and career. Taken individually, I point out that the vignettes do not necessarily tell us a complete story, or even very much at all. However, when the 12 vignettes are taken together as a whole, we begin to see more clearly that the research participants' *subjective* experience of situations in the nonprofit world is indeed different from their subjective experience of the very same situations in the business world. This "different" subjectivity in the nonprofit environment appears to be derived from a subtext of *energy and motivation*, of *commitment to and concern for something larger* that is a function of the nonprofit organization's broader mission of service for a better world.

Implications of this work on policy, practice and research are elaborated in Chapter 6. The primary policy implication of this study is that people and organizations can be intentional about the decisions they make, their behaviors, the values they hold, and the relationships they keep when they make a career shift from the for-profit business world or the nonprofit service sector. The implications of this policy on practice apply to individuals (in areas such as work life, financial planning, career development, etc.) as well as organizations (helping nonprofits and businesses nurture more effective leadership) and to the support system of agencies that serve individuals and organizations in work and career issues through education, advocacy, and leadership development. Opportunities for further research lie in two domains: studies to refine

and expand the work that was begun in this study, and further research to develop support materials and tools relating to these research findings that are discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Differences between the For-profit World and the Nonprofit Sector

Introduction: The Dominant Discourse of Enterprise

A career changer who moves from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector will encounter several differences that are discussed in the literature. Such differences, whether situational/structural (objective) or personal/social (subjective), are likely to jar a person's sensibilities (Wilensky & Hansen, 2001). The literature examines five such dissimilarities between the two sectors: motivational factors; availability of resources; organizational patterns of management and governance; expectations of accountability; and sense of belonging. The reader will note in the following sections an assumption on my part that the nature of the nonprofit sector is less well understood than the qualities and characteristics of the for-profit business world. For this reason, greater attention is paid to an explanation of how the nonprofit world works than how the business world operates.

As much as the literature might try to define the discrete essence of the nonprofit sector, (e.g. Anheier and Seibel, 1990; Weisbrod, 1998; Van Til, 2000; Dollery and Wallis, 2003), nonprofits are typically presented as an organizational type whose persona is formed, not of its own characteristics, but as a counterpoint to more familiar assumptions and generalizations about business organizations. It is assumed that people know how businesses work, but the workings of nonprofit organizations are somehow mysterious and unknown. Even the term *nonprofit* suggests a "this-is-defined-as-being-*not*-that" characterization.

It is clear that the dominant organizational discourse of enterprise -- at least in an American and Western European social context -- is one of commercial organizations. According to the conceptual framework of sociology put forth by German sociologist Ferdinand Tőnnies,

social systems start with the natural/emotional world of the individual/community (*Gemeinschaft*), and evolve into the highly structured/rational order of the organization/society (*Gesellschaft).* A dominant discourse of enterprise is one implied outcome of the evolution to a dominant *Gesellschaft* mentality where "the logic of rational will [takes] on a life of its own that [engulfs] the subject" (Samples, 1988, p. xix); where "the attitude of the businessman prevails" (Loomis and McKinney, 1988, p.2).

It is not surprising to find that the discourse of commercial enterprise pervades the nonprofit world. For example, it is common to read that nonprofit organizations should be more "business-like." The hegemonic "internalization of [corporate business] values" (Schiller, 1989, p. 8) in the West is well-documented (for detailed discussions see Schiller (1989) and Enzenberger (1974)). An excellent example of this can be found in the memoire of John Wood, *Leaving Microsoft to Change the World (2006),* in which, as exemplified by the title of chapter 15, he sets out to build a service organization that will be "the Microsoft of Nonprofits" (Wood, 2006, page 136 - 150).

The rhetoric of business in Western society is an important ingredient in shaping one's personal occupational identity. In his study of occupational identity and rhetoric among cooks, Fine (1996) identified the "rhetoric of business" as one of four primary discourses of the cooking profession. Such dominant discourse imbues our ideas, thoughts, values and actions, much as an ideology does, even if it is an ideal to be avoided or scorned (see Fine, 1996, pp.104-107).

I am not raising the distinction of this dominant discourse for the purposes of engaging in a socio-political critique of the business world, or to encourage people to become aware "of how capitalism shapes social relations and imposes – often without our knowledge – belief systems and assumption (that is, ideologies) that justify and maintain economic and political inequity"

(Brookfield, 2005, p. 13). Rather, as further described in Chapter 3, this dominant discourse informs both the conceptual framework of this research as well as its methodological direction.

Motivated by Mission

Existing literature (e.g. Stein, 2002; Wilensky & Hansen, 2001) suggests that the single greatest difference between the nonprofit and for-profit world is the motivation of *mission* (nonprofit) versus *profitability* (for-profit). This difference parallels the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (the natural "community") and *Gesellschaft* (the rational "society") described by Tonnies (1988).

In nonprofit organizations, achievement of the mission may or may not be related to revenue generation (Stein, 2002, p. 32). In the nonprofit sector, "there's an entirely different set of hierarchical values in weighing decisions, and they derive from the mission, not money" (Bridgespan Group, Inc., 2005, p.6). Nonprofit executives correlate success of the organization to a passion for, and a dedication to its mission; these executives describe the mission of their organizations in terms of an "ethical commitment to serve the community and address societal problems" (Wilensky & Hansen, 2001, p.229). Furthermore, because of lean organizational structures, staffs, and resources, the power of the nonprofit executive comes more from maneuvering and motivating constituencies and stakeholders around the organization's mission, than from offering lucrative financial benefits or positions of authority and control. "In the nonprofit world, the mission is the central organizing principle and raison d'être for all activity, for the distribution of resources, and for the measurement of success" (Bridgespan Group, Inc., 2005, p. 6). The mission orientation of nonprofit organizations provides a lofty motivational influence on its leaders and workers. Many for-profit workers who moved to the nonprofit sector are surprised to find such motivated, impassioned people who respect, appreciate, and honor each other for the good work they are doing (Bridgespan Group, Inc., 2005).

Nonprofit executives characterize their motivation and ability to persevere through difficult times in spiritual terms (i.e. to live a purposeful and meaningful life; to make a difference in the lives of others, etc.) (Wilensky and Hansen, 2001). As well, nonprofit managers characterize their careers with respect to four spiritual elements: *calling* (a sense that this is what they "should" be doing; or destined to do, etc.); *service* (working on behalf of others); *sacrifice* (working hard with little financial reward); and *personal rewards* (experiencing a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment) (Smith, Arendt, Lahman, Seetle, & Duff, 2006).

These "higher" sentiments were echoed in a survey conducted by the Brookings Institution's Center for Public Service in 2001 and 2002 among 1,140 nonprofit employees, 1005 workers in for-profit businesses, and 1051 federal workers. Reporting on this study, Light (2002) notes that workers in the nonprofit sector are more likely than their counterparts in the for-profit sector to say they took their job to serve the public good, and to do something worthwhile, rather than for employment security, salary or material benefits. They characterize their jobs in the context of their organization's mission, and they feel that they personally contribute to help accomplish that mission. Similar findings were reported by The Bridgespan Group, Inc. (2005): interviews with 48 nonprofit leaders who had moved from the for-profit sector revealed that the mission-orientation of nonprofit organizations was an authentic expression of their motivation, and not just a marketing ploy or rallying cry.

Style of Management and Governance

Wilensky and Hansen (2001) found that nonprofit executives view the management and governance of nonprofit organizations as significantly different from management and governance in for-profit enterprises. Nonprofit executives perceive for-profit enterprises as being easier to manage; simpler and more functional in the way they accomplish tasks; existing primarily to provide goods and services to consumers with disposable income; and having sufficient financial and human resources and capital "so that managers [can] exercise extensive

control over organizational processes, products, employees and other stakeholders." (Wilensky & Hansen, 2001, p. 233). For-profit executives who make the move are often surprised to find the work harder and the hours longer in the nonprofit world (Bridgespan Group, Inc., 2005). At the same time, they may find the nonprofit culture to be more "laid back," less "grueling," and less high pressured (Stein, 2002).

With a reliance on volunteer staffs, and grants and donations, nonprofit organizations find it difficult to manifest the same organizational structures and business forecasting methods that are to found in typical for-profit corporations. Unlike managers in the for-profit world who tend to seek like-minded (more important than technical competence) successors from within a pool of bottom-line oriented individuals already working in the company, nonprofit executives operate with lean staffs who are hired primarily for technical skills (Wilensky and Hansen (2001). With respect to organizational governance, for-profit corporate boards are comprised of and characterized as "insiders" whereas nonprofit boards of directors are generally made up of outside community leaders. This distinction puts greater stress onto the nonprofit staff who are the primary vehicle for presenting the organization's internal viewpoint to the governing body (Stein, 2002).

Resource Capacity

Despite the intrinsic motivational rewards they get from their mission-driven endeavors, nonprofit employees report weaknesses in resource capacity and performance effectiveness within their organizations. They are concerned about access to the kind of training, information and technology they need to do their jobs well; the lack of enough employees to do the job well; too much work to do; and fears of potential burnout (Light 2002). Light concludes that

> Viewed as whole, nonprofit employees are highly motivated, hard-working, and deeply committed, but often serve in organizations that do not provide the resources to succeed. Perhaps that is why turnover among the executive directors is so high, why board vacancies are increasing and why so many talented recruits leave early in their careers" (Light, 2002, p.9).

These self-reported concerns run parallel to the several reasons reported in the popular media as to why for-profit workers might find the nonprofit workplace discomforting. Due to limited resources and resulting thin management structures, insufficient resources are allocated for professional development, thereby inhibiting junior managers from stepping in and seamlessly into more senior roles (Tierney, 2006, pp. 20-26). Additionally, little opportunity is provided in the nonprofit workplace for mentoring; salaries are considered to be relatively lower in nonprofit organizations for comparable private sector positions; and organizational parameters of "success" may be more difficult to quantify in mission-driven nonprofit organizations than in commercial enterprises (Bryant, 2007).

Accountability

Accountability is another important distinguishing difference between the cultures of the for-profit and nonprofit worlds. "Unlike the clear financial targets of for-profits, the goals of nonprofits are based on fulfilling often imprecise and challenging human issues." (Wilensky and Hansen, 2001,p. 224). The nonprofit organization does not focus on profitability, but on more human issues that often results in having to meet the diverse expectations and needs of a wide variety of multiple constituencies. The for-profit world is quite different: customer needs and profitability are the primary motivating force for product development, pricing, marketing and sales (Bridgespan Group, Inc. 2005).

Sense of Belonging: A Sociological Perspective

The shift from for-profit to nonprofit employment can be a difficult emotional path for the worker, especially in the context of "belonging" (Stein, 2002). In her landmark study of dislocated for-profit workers who attempted to shift their work and employment to the nonprofit sector, Stein notes a lack of colleagues and mentors across the two sectors who could facilitate a successful transition for someone from one sector to the other (Stein, 2002). Playing it alone, the for-profit worker in the nonprofit world may have difficulty with the transition. Management rewards in nonprofit organizations are considered to be "psychic", "intrinsic" and "more relaxed"

(Stein, 2002, p.50), and less financial than in the for-profit world. Key managers in nonprofits tend to be drawn from a close in network of already-known contacts and acquaintances.

As a sociologist, Stein (2002) uses two conceptual theories of social psychology and sociology as the bases for her primary explanation of the barriers associated with career changing from for-profit to nonprofit sectors: *occupational stereotyping,* which tends to amplify and reinforce attributions by and between in-groups and out-groups; and *adult* [occupational] *socialization*, which are "techniques that occupations use to sustain the homogeneity of their occupations and industries… [through the teaching of] requisite values and behaviors." (Stein, 2002, p. 22). The primary impact of occupational stereotyping is that "different organizational cultures in the profit and nonprofit worlds are marked by unflattering stereotypes of the other and tend, therefore, to prefer hiring from within their own sector" (p. 19). Citing references from media articles, Stein notes that corporate managers consider nonprofit managers to be more passionate than enterprising; they lack the *hard* skills of business. On the other side of the coin, the nonprofit community characterizes corporate executives as "soul-snatchers" who only want to find a cheap and quick fix for social action, and who think of nonprofit managers as naïve dabblers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while no data is available to indicate the numbers of people changing careers from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector, those who do make the change are not necessarily finding the transition to be smooth; they find that many issues can get in the way (Stein, 2002). The differences between the nonprofit sector and the for-profit sector are significant: the sources of motivation are different; the use and availability of resources are different; management and governance are different; and levels of accountability are different. Subjectively, career changers may have a difficult time being accepted and socially comfortable in their new work environment. Given these significant differences, it was not surprising to find that the career changers who participated in this research were able easily to describe the

challenges they faced in trying to make meaning of their new work environment. In the next section of this literature review, I examine certain aspects of career development theory that may explain several important underlying factors that are at play for the career changers studied in this research.

Career Theory

Because my research deals with the career change a person has chosen to make from for-profit to nonprofit work, issues relating to career development should be included in the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Therefore, I have included the topic of *career development theory* in this review of literature.

Much like the field of education, career development theory is a low consensus, trans-disciplinary subject encompassing several of the social sciences (Arthur, et al., 1989), including organizational behavior, economics, sociology, and psychology. (Betz, et al, 1989), as well as political science, history and geography (Bird, 1994). Indeed, the subject of career theory is too vast to include all its dimensions here. I have narrowed the literature review of career theory to a select set of sub-topics which seem to be salient to the focus of my research, namely to the challenges that people from the for-profit world might face when they shift their work and career focus to the nonprofit sector. In particular, the review explores certain aspects of this theoretical base that relate to peoples' subjective experience of their career in the context of *self-direction* in work choices, *transition and change* in working environments, and *career success*.

A Constructivist Definition of "Career"

Many connotations of "career" are discussed in the literature. This review starts with one of the more frequently cited definitions: "The evolving sequence of a person's work experiences, over time" (Arthur, et al, 1989, p. 8). Several implications follow from this baseline definition (the following taken from Inkson, 2007, p. 3). A given "career" belongs to a specific person. Career is not a momentary phenomenon, but lasts over the course of a person's life. Moreover,

work-over-the-lifetime is the unit of consideration, not just a job here and a job there. As such, careers are continuously dynamic and changing while at the same time reflecting continuity; current experiences of work generally follow from past experiences, and past experiences tend to suggest potential future experiences and outcomes. "Work experience" is not limited only to what happens "on the job," but is derived from all aspects of life that might have a bearing on life at work; personal interests are therefore included in this definition of work experience.

If one understands Arthur's widely accepted definition of career (as quoted above) only with an objective orientation, it would be incomplete for the purposes of my research. The objective notion of career as "work experience" -- exemplified by a listing of job positions in someone's resume -- fails to encompass *personal experience;* the understanding, meaning-making, emotions, judgments, etc. of and about work over a lifetime. Given that my study will explore how people make sense of career changes, the unit of analysis for the research must be the individual's experience of those changes. I need to work with a more "constructivist" orientation to "career" and "work experience," as described below.

Constructivism focuses on how people view themselves, organize their lives, and develop their base of knowledge. "Constructivism proposes that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes... The world cannot be known directly, but rather by the construction imposed upon it by the mind" (Young and Collin, 2004, p.375). In the context of "career", self-reflection and self-examination are key components of personal meaning-making with specific regard to work and employment. In a constructivist orientation, personal development and growth become a major motivation for career management and action (Savickas, 2000).

Scholars with a constructivist point of view regarding career (e.g. Hall, 2002; Young and Collin, 2000), interpret Arthur, et al's (1989) definition of career as the intersection of a person's broadly defined life story and the social context with which they interact at their work and

employment. The sequential flow of occupations and positions across a working lifetime thus "can involve self-identity and reflect individuals' sense of who they are, who they wish to be, and their hopes, dreams, fears, and frustrations... Career can be seen as an overarching construct that gives meaning to the individual's life" (Young & Collin, 2000, p. 5).

A Constructivist History of Career

When one examines the history of "career" from a constructivist perspective, each historical period has its own corresponding social context; and each respective social context has its own identifiable social arrangement of work – manifested in the nature of careers for that time period (Savickas, 2000). In the United States, an early agrarian society (17th and 18th century) shaped a career orientation based on the family farm, and home-based or small-community social interaction. Outside of the farm, work was considered vocational and called a "craft." The industrialization of America at the end of the 19th century resulted in significant changes in the institutions of work, school and family. Urbanization of the country, technological developments, and the emergence of large corporate organizations changed the notion of work from "craft" to "job." Many of the traditional "craft" vocations were eliminated and replaced by mass production assembly line work.

For most of the 20th century, the social context of "work" was shaped by institutional bureaucracies and their predominantly hierarchical bureaucratic boundaries. Toward the end of the century, however, globalization and emergence of the information society led to dramatic new concepts of career. Today, career paths are no longer exclusively linear or obvious. People are no longer expecting to spend their life of work at a single company, or in an obvious progression of ever more elevated positions (Bird, 1994). Change has become the norm, and adaptability to change the primary career objective. The self-managed career has become commonplace as workers are now likely to choose their employer (Hall 1976, 2002). Work experience has become a source of personal learning and development, which in turn, makes "knowledge" the personal capital for securing the next appropriate position.

Objective and Subjective Notions of Career

Because my research is focusing on the personal response to challenges that people face when they make a major career transition, it is important to address the individual as the unit of analysis with respect to career and work. Through the lens of constructivism, the perspective on "career" shifts from objective dimensions of organizational realities and personal characteristics (e.g. salary, position, advancement, personality traits and factors, etc.), to the subjective qualities of personal response and interpretation of direct experience. In this regard, the distinction must be made between the *objective* career and the *subjective* career.

"Objective career" accounts for circumstances and organizational dimensions in the worker's environment (i.e. the nature of the work place, work assignments, professions, and the larger socio-political-economic world). The objective career considers formal roles, titles, job responsibilities, salary progression, and organizational and social status (Parker, 2002). It is the observed progress of an individual in their career (Storey, 2000); the structural or public aspects of career which can be studied (Barley, 1989).

"Subjective career" on the other hand, involves the meaning people make of their work and employment *experience*, as well as their *aspirations* and *emotional reaction* to that experience (Barley, 1989; Savickas, 2000; Parker, 2002; Inkson, 2007). "Subjective notions of career may be shaped by personal perceptions of role, attitudes, identity, and self-worth, and broader social factors such as class and gender" (Doyle, 2000, p. 228-229). Subjective careers are often told (and researched) as life stories over a lifetime, with the individual as the central character (Inkson, 2007). Whether autobiography, life anecdote, or straightforward narrative, a story is a form of construction of meaning (Young and Collin, 2004). One's career narrative changes as new associations, interpretations and meanings are made out of ever-changing circumstances. Such a story is a way of using past experience to make sense of the present, and to anticipate the future (Barley, 1989).

Career Metaphors

A metaphorical approach is particularly well suited to the subjective orientation of career that I am using in this study, in that metaphors encourage imaginative personal interpretation of an image or word(s) that serve as a proxy for some other "thing", "action", "value", or "relationship". Indeed, metaphorical references have always permeated both scholarly and lay understandings of career. Consider as examples, the career *ladder*, *fast track* career, a *stalled* career; career *path*, career *trajectory*, etc. (Inkson, 2002). In his most recent textbook on career development, Kerr Inkson (2007), organizes his entire examination of career theory around a metaphorical typology.

By their very nature, metaphors can be profoundly subjective. They are not simply figurative substitutions for something more literal. Rather, by evoking thoughts, feelings and perceptions from the inner mind, metaphors serve to generate new or expanded viewpoints, and at the same time to set constructed limits and boundaries. "Metaphor provides the means to represent career… in a nonlinear form of representation [that] is required … in order to encapsulate the irreducible hermeneutic characteristic of a career" (Mignot, 2004, p. 468). Several key metaphors of career are particularly relevant to my research: *Protean* career, boundaryless career, career as *story*, career as *repository of knowledge*, and career as *creative process.* Below, I describe each of these metaphors and highlight the primary functional characteristics of action within each.

Protean Career

Proteus was a mythical Greek sea creature who could change shape at will. As a common adjective, "protean" means something is able to take many forms; it is versatile. The metaphor of a *protean career*, first proposed by Hall in the mid-1970's and embellished by him and his colleagues over the past 30 years (1976, 1996, 2002, 2002b, 2004,2005) suggests that people can assert change in the context of work and career; they can adapt by choice to new work experiences. Career as *self-identity* is a key component of the protean career construct.

Functional action in the protean career is manifested as *career self-direction*: the capability of being versatile and adaptive to external conditions and internal values; asserting choices responsively about work and employment. The point of the Protean career is not to change for the sake of change, but to change in order to meet the turbulent circumstances of the workplace and to adjust to changing personal values, needs, goals, and interests.

The Boundaryless Career

The protean career sets the stage for a focus on the individual in discussion of career. But self-direction and adaptability, the two primary characteristics of the protean metaphor, are only part of the equation. The fluid nature of career structure itself, and the role and experience of the individual in shaping that structure are at the heart of the boundaryless career metaphor. The *boundaryless career* metaphor describes a *process* that helps us understand the careers of those who do not follow traditional unitary organizational or occupational career paths (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). It is a concept that emerges directly out of economic, technological and socio-political trends of the late

20th century (I suspect we might find that these are the very same circumstances that have led to the rise of interest in the nonprofit sector by for-profit workers).

As a metaphor, the *boundaryless career* runs parallel to the protean career. In much of the literature on career theory prior to the 1990's, the *process* of "career journey" was consistently described as a sequence and pattern of work with the movement from one job to the next within a generally consistent and rational flow of employment or occupation (Inkson, 2007, p. 133). "Most ideas about employment emphasized a single, relatively stable organizational arena" (Arthur, 1994, p.299). Moreover, with the emergence in the mid-1970's of the concept of a flexible and agile self-designing organization, notions about the relationship of the individual to "organizational employment" also became more fluid (Arthur, 1994). In such a context, the metaphors of "protean" and "boundaryless" careers were developed to reflect the self-directed individual as a major focus of analysis in career theory.

In this study, the concern is not so much about occupational careers (working within the same field), organizational careers (working within the same company), entrepreneurial careers (working to form independent ventures (Kanter, 1989)) or self-employment careers (working as a sole proprietor). Rather, the research is concerned more with the *subjective process and experience* of a major shift, than with the objective content (although objective issues of functional or sequential work experience also come into play). This exploration of the meaning people make of the differences they face when they shift their work from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector examines the *experience of the individual* in the discrete period of the shift. Because the unit of analysis is the individual and the individual's experience of career, the aspects of career examined are more related to underlying personal motivational dimensions. This is the

very point of the *boundaryless career* which Inkson (2007) positions as a subtopic within the career-as-journey metaphor.

For the purposes of my research, boundaryless career "depends on the interpretation of the career actor, who may perceive a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints" (Arthur, 1994, p. 296) (this is the sixth -- and last -- of the several meanings of the term presented by Arthur on the subject). The subjective orientation of this definition emphasizes the psychology of the actor and deemphasizes the organizational role and impact in a career transition across traditional boundaries. Within this construct, paramount consideration is given to the actors' open-ended relationship to their work identity and roles, the control they assert over decisions about their work life, and the learning they accrue as a result (Arthur, 1994). Inkson (2007) concurs when he writes, "In a changing environment, [the concept of a boundaryless career] encourages mobility, flexibility, the development of currently valued knowledge, the development of networks, and the taking of responsibility for one's own career" (p. 140).

Functional action within the boundaryless career encompasses the duality of *agency* and *communion*. *Agency* entails self-assertion; being in control of one's environment. *Communion* entails being at one with the environment; integrating environmental considerations into one's psyche (Marshall, 1989). Taking responsibility for and structuring one's career is a function of agency. Organized learning, adaptability, and acceptance of a situation are a function of communion (Weick, 1996). While both agency and communion appear to be important characteristics of operating successfully in a boundaryless career,

> …people with strong dispositions favoring agency, control, and predictability, should be bothered sooner by the loss of boundaries and situational structure than would people disposed toward communion. Those with an agency mind-set

> should persist longer in treating. .. boundaryless careers as if they were still about hierarchical advancement (Weick, 1996, p. 48).

In sum, the concept of the boundaryless career provides several important distinctions that are relevant to my research. First, this metaphor offers a highly subjective orientation, where the actor's interpretation of career change is an essential aspect of the values attached to career. Second, a variety of developmental as well as vocational competencies are required for an individual to succeed in a boundaryless career. Third, the actor must be adaptable and flexible to meet the varied and diverse requirements and expectations of each successive work situation. Fourth, traditional objective benefits (e.g., salary, hierarchical advancement, etc.) are less important than subjective intrinsic rewards. Fifth, the actor is more likely to seek work experiences that are more aligned and integrated with the actor's personal worldview (Ellig and Thatchenkery, 1996).

Career as Story

Much of the current academic literature on career theory is based on stories people tell about their work experiences (Inkson, 2007). Atkinson (1995) explains the compelling nature of stories and storytelling:

> In some mysterious, amazing way our stories and our lives are all tied together… In telling our life story, we gain new insights into human dilemmas, human struggles, and human triumphs, while also gaining a greater appreciation of how values and beliefs are acquired, shaped, and held onto. In this way, the story of one person can become the story of us all (Atkinson, 1995, p. 4).

The career-as-stories metaphor brings together the objective and subjective aspects of career development theory. On one hand, a career is comprised of a sequence of ongoing positions, roles, events, decisions, etc., all of which can be characterized objectively. At the same time, these situations and circumstances evoke subjective responses, including emotions, attitudes, beliefs, interpretations, etc. The story of one's

career includes the telling of both the objective nature of circumstances and situations, as well as the subjective aspects of the actor's experience of those circumstances and situations (Kidd, 2004).

Functional action in the story metaphor is *storytelling*. As the expression of personal interpretation of one's experience, storytelling has great value for the story teller, for the story listener, and for the story analyst. For the storyteller, the subjective interpretation of work and life experiences as told in narratives helps shape and define identity, gives meaning to experiences, and establishes parameters of discourse on the subject. The listener experiences the storyteller's view of his/her own life, with the possibility of connecting in some way to similar (or dissimilar) subjective interpretations of the story. The story analyst is able to use the story narrative as a research tool to better understand the teller's outlook and interpretation of experience, thus shaping new or elaborating on existing theory.

Story telling is considered to be a very subjective process. According to Bujold (2004), the theory of narrative suggests that stories are a form of expression that gives meaning to life events and identity to the actor who is living that life. Storytelling about career manifests one's *self-expression* about work and life. It is a way for people to articulate their own *self-perceived* purpose in life, identity, impact of situations and circumstances, and what they believe they have learned through their interaction with work (Inkson, 2007). A story brings coherence to the subjective aspects of work and employment: relationships, decisions, personal goals, observable patterns, paradoxes, emotions etc., and reveals nuances of the central actor's identity and character through his/her work experience. Moreover, the story can illuminate contradictions, dilemmas, trade-offs, and other dualities that are often embedded within a person's career (Bujold, 2004).

Career as Repository of Knowledge

Inkson, (2007) notes that the long-held view of career as a continuous and seamless journey no longer applies. Occupational or organizational careers these days are rarely comprised of a sequentially smooth and continuous flow of work and employment over one's lifetime. Indeed, the metaphor of the *career-as-repository-of-personal-knowledge*, may be more appropriate in today's world, with the "journey being only a means to that end." (Inkson, 2007, p. 145). In this metaphor, careers become a resource for the development of personal knowledge and learning based on work experiences over the course of a lifetime (Bird, 1994); and these career-based knowledge resources can be utilized by both the employer organizations or by the individual traveling along the path. Criteria for choosing work experience and career direction might be as much a function of personal learning as it is an external motivation (e.g. accumulation of wealth or status) that people seek to better their lives.

Functional action in the repository-of-knowledge metaphor is *learning*, and the key objective of action in this metaphor (i.e. "repository") is the *accumulation of learning* (Bird, 1994). This includes not only the objective elements of learning (e.g. skills, expertise, specialized certifications and credentials, etc.), but the subjective aspects of learning as well (e.g. personal relationships, how to "fit in", emotional responses to work situations, etc.). Bird (1994) explains how this career metaphor expands the bandwidth of our research attention as we examine what is at play when career changers "figure out" how to fit into their new nonprofit work setting:

> The definition of careers as repositories of knowledge... directs attention away from factors that have traditionally been of interest to researchers-- types of position held, lengths of tenure, etc.-- and toward more abstract factors such as the relevance of one's knowledge to the organization, how work experiences are integrated and synthesized, and how the knowledge accumulated can be applied in new ways, leading to new experiences" (Bird, 1994, p.327).

Thus, in the careers-as-repositories of knowledge metaphor, the accumulated prior learning that career changers bring to their new nonprofit jobs, not only helps facilitate the transition to the new work domain, but also sets the stage for new learning that will surely take place during and following the transition to the nonprofit sector.

Career as a Creative Process

> Career development…through the multiple decisions that it requires and the risk that it involves, and because of the individuals' unique ways of dealing with obstacles, unforeseen events, various circumstances, chance, and inner conflicts, can be considered, at least in part, as a creative process (Bujold, 2004, p.471).

Of the many ways to construe and define "creative process," I am drawn particularly to three: as an intuitive pathway to *authentic personal expression* (as in, "the mysteries of artistic creation" (Gardner, 1982, p. xiii)) ; as a vehicle for generating new possibilities for *developmental change and growth* (as in, "creative growth process" (Land and Jarman, 1992, p.117)); and as a practical method of identifying and implementing best *solutions to problems or challenges* (as in, "the logic of creativity" (DeBono, 1992, p.4)). The career-as-creative-process metaphor encompasses all three of these orientations, and directs our attention to the way in which the career changer from the for-profit world calls upon all three ways of being creative while transitioning to the nonprofit sector. To wit, the *expressive* aspect of creativity manifests in the nonprofit field(s) that the career changer chooses; the *developmental* aspect of creativity manifests in the positions that the career changer takes; and the *problem-solving* aspect of creativity manifests in the new ways that the career changer addresses strategic challenges in the nonprofit work environment.

Functional action in the career-as-creative-process metaphor entails several related elements: domain skills; working style; thinking skills; and intrinsic motivation (Amabile,1989). *Domain skills* are "the raw materials of talent, education, and

experience in one or more particular areas of knowledge" (p.43). *Creative working style* is a commitment to excellence and quality, dedication and persistence, etc., (p. 47). *Creative thinking skills* are the tools and techniques of creative process (e.g. suspending judgment, breaking old patterns, thinking broadly, etc. (p. 48-49). *Intrinsic motivation* is "the desire to do something for its own sake, because it is interesting, satisfying, or personally challenging" (p.50). These qualities and characteristics all will be needed as the career changer (a) applies old skills from the for-profit domain, and learns new ones in the nonprofit domain; (b) learns new work habits and work styles of the nonprofit workplace; (c) finds it necessary to "let go" of old habits and form new ones; and (d) shifts to the mission-driven motivation that characterizes the nonprofit professions.

The preceding review of career metaphors proved to be helpful as the research process unfolded. A metaphorical analysis of narratives told by the five research participants illuminates the factors of careers that are most salient to career changers as they encounter and address the differences they experience when they shift their work from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector.

Subjective Career Success

As discussed in earlier sections, the potential challenges that for-profit workers are likely to confront when they shift their work and career focus to the nonprofit sector are also likely to raise issues about *career success* for the career changers. *Have I made the "right" decision? What do others think of me for doing this? What if it doesn't work out? Am I proud of this work? Is this work worthy of my professional stature?* These are questions that might arise, all of which are in the realm of "career success".

According to Gunz and Heslin (2005), before the 1500's, the definition of "success" had no qualitative component. "Success" was synonymous with "outcome"; something that simply happened as a subsequent result of some prior action or event. Since the 16th century, however,

success has taken on a positive connotation indicating the fulfillment of one's desires. In this definitional context, whether or not one views a given degree of achievement as being positively related to one's desires remains up to the individual; and so "success" is a very subjective term (which fits the subjective nature of the research at hand).

With respect to "career", the measurement of "success" depends on several factors: one's orientation to career (objective vs. subjective); the parameters of career that will be evaluated (i.e. "what" is being measured); the perspective of the person making judgments about success (i.e. "who" is doing the measuring); and whether or not the level or quantity of a circumstance is considered significant enough to be considered a "success" ("how much" of a given circumstance) (Gunz and Heslin, 2005).

Objective career success is dependent on such factors as level of compensation, position/rank, or degree of authority and control of resources, etc. *Subjective career success*, on the other hand, is a function of how people *feel* about the circumstantial and emotional outcomes from their work and employment. The subjective orientation presents a conundrum to the researcher, who must identify not only the quantitative (circumstantial) and qualitative (emotional) parameters that the subject believes to be at play, but also the degree to which the subject has positive or negative feelings about those parameters. For example, if "satisfaction" is a valid subjective parameter of "career success," with respect to "what" will satisfaction be determined: the job? relationships at the workplace? compensation levels? career progress to date? These are all factors in exploring and examining the nature of career success with respect to career changers from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector.

Subjective career success criteria extend beyond simply job satisfaction, to reflect a host of personal and cultural values (e.g. sense of identity, purpose, and work-life balance). As such, one's view of career success is dependent on both culture and profession. For example, Native Americans are not likely to have the same cultural way of defining career success as Parisians.

Symphony musicians are not necessarily going to define career success the same way professionally as solo classical artists, or rock musicians.

Hansen (2005) found that people use two sets of standards will to evaluate their career success: either *self-referent* criteria (personal achievement regardless of what is happening to others), and *other-referent* criteria (comparisons with what others have – or have not -- achieved). For either set of criteria, evaluations can be drawn from both subjective and subjective domains, as shown in Table 2.1. In any event, "satisfaction" and "career success" are not necessarily mutually dependent:

> "Satisfaction" is the most common dimension of career success. Yet, interestingly, not having a satisfying job does not necessarily detract from the possibility of having a highly successful career. As well, a dissatisfying career does not preclude holding a very satisfying job at some point along the way. A great job that may have little to do with one's career path has little no impact on career success, and a terrible job that could lead to something better might be part of the successful career (Heslin, 2005).

Conclusion

The 21st century constructivist theory of career (e.g. Young and Collin, 2004; Savickas, 2000), focuses on a person's perceived relationship with, and experience of a host of circumstances, events and trends in their world, including the information technology revolution, economic crises, the restructuring of corporate and political organizations, and the emergence of significant cultural and social movements. It seems clear to me that the degree and magnitude of change that occurs for someone in the for-profit world who joins the nonprofit sector is a

Table 2.1
Criteria and Domains of Career Success

Taken from Heslin 2005, p.121

Criterion, domain	Example of a successful career
Self-referent / objective	*I have achieved a personal goal of earning a certain level of annual salary.*
Self-referent / subjective	*I have achieved a healthy work-life balance;* *I am fulfilled at home and work.*
Other-referent / objective	*I hold a higher position than most of my college classmates*
Other referent / subjective	*I have nurturing relationships with the people around me.*

manifestation of this context of turbulence in the contemporary world of career. I'm not sure that such change could have occurred in earlier generations.

Career development theory provides several important insights for my research agenda. First, I was better able to distinguish the objective and subjective factors expressed by the research participants as they reported their experience of the challenges they faced in making the transition from for-profit to nonprofit work. Second, the objective situations the research participants described of their careers opened the door for me to probe for their deeper subjective experience. Third, as the research participants told the story of their experience of these challenges, I could more easily pick up on salient markers for data analysis based on each of the metaphors reviewed above, as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2
Story References Related To Career Metaphors

Metaphor	Markers for data analysis
Protean	Self-direction, autonomy, agency.
Boundaryless	The nature of movement from one career to the other; constraints to making the shift; emerging changes in personal orientation to career as the shift takes place; changed or new skills and competencies required in making the change; expectations in the old and new settings.
Story	The plot (sequence of career events); situational developments (objective career experience); character development (subjective career experience); paradoxes, dilemmas and trade-offs that had to be faced.
Repository of knowledge	Skills that were learned; Norms and cultural values that were learned; personal issues that were learned; insights about personal development that were learned; how and where learning took place; how accumulated learning helped address challenges that were experienced.
Creative process	Domain skills that proved to be most helpful; issues relating to working styles; old patterns and habits that changed/adjusted/shattered, and new patterns that emerged; changes in personal motivations for work.

This section holds two helpful implications for this research. First, the concept of *objective career* helps identify external circumstances that are the situational basis for the internal *subjective career* experience. Career-affecting conditions (elements of objective career) resulting from the work-shift from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector generate personal interpretations within the career changers who are trying to make sense of their experience (constructed subjective career). Second, the theory of career success suggests both objective and subjective criteria by which the subjects of my research measure their sense of fulfillment regarding the career change The career changers determine their level of success in comparison to others ("other-referent" criteria), versus in relation to objectives they assert for themselves without reference to others ("self-referent" criteria).

Constructivist subjective career theory suggests that people make sense of their careers through personal interpretations of their experience of work and employment over their lifetime. In the next section, I explore transformative learning theory, which suggests that when interpretations of current career experience are based on interpretations of past experiences that no longer apply to the current situation, then a new perspective of meaning needs to be created. This clash of perspectives proved to be a significant source of the challenges career changers face when they experience differences between one environment (the for-profit world) and another (the nonprofit sector).

Transformative Learning Theory

Introduction

In the first section of this literature review, I cited research on nonprofit organizations suggesting that differences between the for-profit business world and the nonprofit service sector are likely to cause career changers a degree of personal consternation; and that career changers will have some level of difficulty making meaning of these "different" things in their new work setting. In the second part of this chapter, I reviewed subjective career theory suggesting that such differences create the potential for people to lose faith in themselves – to be drained of energy and suffer decreases in performance. In this last section of the literature review, I explore a theory of adult development and learning called *transformative learning* that explains both why career changers experience differences between the for-profit and nonprofit worlds as "challenges", and how they might be able to address those challenges in order to find themselves in a state of greater grace, satisfaction and effectiveness within their new nonprofit work environment.

Background of Transformative Learning Theory

Since the late 1970's, transformative learning has become a well-researched field, pioneered by Dr. Jack Mezirow. Mezirow first developed the idea of transformative learning as he observed the significant changes his wife underwent as she attended a women's workforce re-entry program at a local community college. He subsequently conducted a nation-wide study of such college re-entry programs for women, where the basics of the theory were first developed and published (Mezirow, 1978a). In that study, Mezirow (1978a) found that women attending re-entry programs experienced a significant shift in their orientation to their identity and role in the world. He coined the phrase "transformation of meaning perspectives" to characterize this process and outcome.

Over the years since, Mezirow, his associates and colleagues have produced a number of books, articles and studies on the subject as it relates to adult education and social action. It should be noted, however, that the literature of transformative learning theory *per se* is not vast; direct references to the theory consistently cite Mezirow's own foundational texts (Mezirow 1978, 1991, 2000) rather than subsequent works by others. Still, the theory is regularly cited by those whose research focuses generally on adult development and learning (e.g. Kegan, 1994; Mackeracher, 2004; Merriam, 2005; Wolf, 2005). These authors suggest that transformative learning theory provides a kind of roadmap for dealing with life transitions in adulthood (Merriam, 2005), while others suggest that the theory itself is a fundamental agenda-setter for approaches to adult development (Kegan 1994, 2000).

Overview of Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory is a theory of learning based on changes in consciousness (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). The theory evolved over a period of 20 or so years (1978-2000). The following paragraphs synthesize key points of transformative learning that are particularly salient to this study (taken from Cranton, 1994).

Transformative learning is a process by which people examine, question, validate, and revise their perceptions of the experiences that they encounter in life. These perceptions are reflected in their interpretation of experience, i.e. by the meaning that they ascribe to their experience. Interpretations of past experience shape interpretation (meaning) of current experience, creating, over time, a "habitual expectation" -- in effect, a frame of reference for all activity: what happens, what is read, what is seen, what others say, etc. Such habits of expectation and frames of reference are called *meaning perspectives*.

"Meaning perspective" is the psychological structure of cultural assumptions by which we use past experience to assimilate and transform new experiences (Mezirow, 1978a, 1978b). When people become aware of, and seriously consider the many social, economic, political, psychological, and religious assumptions upon which their meaning perspective is based, they can "reconstruct [their] personal frame of reference, self-concept, goals, and criteria for evaluating change. New priorities for action are likely to result" (Mezirow, 1978a, p. 7). In essence, meaning perspective is a framework for locating, defining and understanding one's inner self and one's relationship to the outer world.

Transformative learning theory holds socialization as a primary context in which such meaning perspectives are created and recognizes the degree to which social goals and conditions influence how adults make meaning of their experience. Because interaction with other people so often informs our construction of meaning, transformative learning theory, to a great extent, is considered to be a social constructivist theory of learning.

Meaning perspectives serve as a filter for our experiences. Within meaning perspectives, we set up rules -- called *meaning schemes* -- that guide our interpretation of a given experience. For the most part, the filter of meaning perspectives and their corresponding meaning schemes operate without critical self-observation. That is, we tend *not* to examine ways that we know about things, we tend *not* to question beliefs that we live by, and we tend *not* to reflect on feelings

that are evoked automatically by things around us. As a result, one may not even be aware when a given meaning scheme is distorting an interpretation of experience, or when one's reactive response to circumstances and situations in the environment are dysfunctional.

Transformative learning occurs when dysfunctional meaning perspectives and meaning schemes are critically examined and questioned, invalidated, and then revised. This process of personal reflection, entails an "intentional reassessment of prior learning to reestablish its validity by identifying and correcting distortions in its content, process, or premises" (Mezirow, 1991, p.15). Transformative learning theory thus explains not only how adults make meaning of their world, but also the underlying framework that influences how those meanings get made in the first place, and how one's sense of things can be changed when the meaning perspectives prove to be no longer functional (Mezirow, 1991).

Transformative Learning: A Theory of Human Development and Learning

Transformative learning starts with the notion that one's way of looking at and responding to the world is shaped by the meanings one attaches to a continuous sequence of socio-cultural and socio-historical life experiences. The transformative life is thus an ongoing process of continuous changes in how adults make sense of, and construct the world around them. "As there are no fixed truths or totally definitive knowledge, and because circumstances change, the human condition might be best understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 3).

Within transformative learning theory, learning is defined as "the process of using prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to future action" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 5). Meaning exists within one's self, not in external sources, and is evoked through one's direct interpretation of interaction with people, cultures, and objects within one's environment. Thus, one both acquires and validates interpretation of experience through human (social) interaction and communication. Meaning perspectives build and grow through an ever expanding body of interpreted past experiences (which themselves are

rooted in interaction with socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts), which then is relied upon to anticipate future life experience.

In transformative learning, three defining developmental changes take place; a significant altering of *meaning perspective* (the overall context for interpreting experience); of associated *meaning schemes* (the specific criteria we apply to interpret a given type of experience), and of the *premises* and *assumptions* that underlie a given meaning perspective and its related meaning schemes. The boundaries unconsciously established by such a system of meaning-making (i.e. the taken-for-granted interpretation of past experience as a guide for interpreting current and future experience) can lead to false expectations about how the world works and how to respond to it.

Uncritically assimilated presuppositions may distort our *ways of knowing*, involving epistemic assumptions; our *ways of believing*, involving social norms, cultural or language codes, and social ideologies; and our *ways of feeling*, involving repressed parental prohibitions from childhood that control the adult feelings and behavior through anxiety." (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5).

Whether construed as being merely uncomfortable, or as a painful personal crisis, the recognition of a failed meaning perspective will most likely result in negative personal affect. When problems of this kind arise, adults must reassess familiar assumptions that guide their decision-making, and develop a new orientation that is somehow more workable; that is, they must establish a new, or even a dramatically different way of looking at the world that will encompass a broader range of possibilities. As a given meaning perspective fails to address given situations, and when merely expanding skills and knowledge within the current perspective fails to resolve the anomalies that have arisen, a person begins to recognize that the old perspective are no longer reliable. A new, more reliable meaning perspective that has greater value can be shaped through *critical reflection* as described in the next section.

The Role of Reflectivity in Meaning Making

Reflectivity is the state of becoming aware of and then examining and assessing feelings, perceptions, meanings, and behaviors; or habitual ways of seeing, thinking, feeling or acting. Our ability to be self-reflective is a relatively recent development in human capacity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993), and its impact on social development has been significant:

> Once the mind realized its autonomy, individuals were able to conceive of themselves as independent agents with their own self-interest. For the first time, it was possible for people to emancipate themselves from the rules of genes and culture. A person could now have unique dreams, and take an individual stance, based on personal goals. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, pp. 76-77).

Developmentally, people achieve the capacity for self-reflection in adulthood (Mezirow, 1981; Kegan, 1994), at a time when "the developmental task… is to bring to awareness, and challenge the premises of beliefs about *how life is* (or *should* be) and who I am (or *should* be) that they internalized at the end of psychological adolescence… [Reflection] requires examining one's own way of knowing -- that is, looking *at* one's lenses of perception, not just *through* them" (Taylor, 2006, p. 79). *Critical reflection* challenges notions of prior learning, and "occurs when patterns of a person's beliefs, goals, or expectations are put to the test by means of thoughtful questioning. Reflective experiences... are intended to bring about changes in the established beliefs. Over time, these experiences may also lead to change in the way [people] think about [the subjects upon which they are reflecting]" (van Halen-Faber, 1997,p.51-52).

Mezirow (1981) identified six levels of reflectivity, as shown in Table 2.3. The first three levels (*affect*, *discriminant*, and *judgmental)* are the direct *conscious* reflection on perceptions, thoughts, and actions, while the second three levels (*conceptual*, *psychic*, and *theoretical)* characterize the domain of critical consciousness, when the awareness of conscious reflection itself is critiqued.

Table 2.3
Levels of Reflectivity
Taken from Mezirow, 1981 (pp.11-15)

Consciousness	**Becoming aware of…**
Affect	Feelings and emotions
Discriminant	The value and effectiveness of perceptions, thoughts, actions, and habits of doing things.
Judgmental	Value judgments (i.e. good<>bad, right<> wrong) regarding the nature and quality of our perceptions thoughts and actions and habits of doing things.
Critical consciousness	**Evaluating/assessing/critiquing…**
Conceptual	Assertions (declarations, *not* judgments) we make of good and bad
Psychic	Intuitive responses to things.
Theoretical	Taken for granted assumptions which explain why we perceive, feel, and act the way we do.

Berger (2004) names a seventh type of reflectivity -- *transformational reflectivity* -- that encompasses both awareness *and* creative action in the equation. In this case, a person "begins to unpack what is (to question assumptions, use new lenses, new perspectives, etc.)… and seeks to create new forms of thinking, new discoveries... to move outside the form of current understanding and into a new place." (pp. 337-338).

When adults confront situations that are anomalous to existing perspective(s), and then resolve them by reflecting on taken-for-granted assumptions about life that no longer serve to integrate experiences (i.e. no longer help make sense of things, shape self-identity, define roles, etc.), new meaning perspectives are created to achieve developmental growth. In transformative learning theory, adulthood is thus an ever-expanding developmental process of maturation in the field of meaning-making:

> …toward meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, discriminating, and more integrative of experience… perspectives that are more universal and better able to deal with abstract relationships, that more clearly identified psychocultural assumptions shaping our actions and causing our needs, that provide criteria for more principled value judgments, enhance our sense of agency or control and give us a clearer meaning and sense of direction in our lives (Mezirow, 1978b, p. 106).

Transformation as a Process: What Actually Happens?

Mezirow (1991, p. 168-169) outlines the following sequential phases of perspective transformation within the construct of transformative learning theory:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame;
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural, or psychological assumptions;
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change;
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
6. Planning a course of action.
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
8. Provisional trying new roles;
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

Transformation might best be characterized metaphorically as a three-stage process that entails, (1) circumstances and conditions that lead to a point or state of emergent change (in Mezirow's 10-step process, phases 1-3); (2) the crossing of a *threshold* and awakening to dramatic new possibilities (Mezirow's phases 4 - 6); and (3) a *reconfiguration and reintegration* of physical, social, organizational, and emotional structures and worldviews in order to accommodate the realities of some new or next stage of development (Mezirow's phases 7-10). While "threshold" implies something that is crossed in a moment in time, the notion of transformation as a journey encompasses all three phase components: the precursor to the threshold, crossing the threshold, and what happens subsequent to the crossing. In other words, the process of transformation has a beginning, middle and an end.

This three-stage beginning-middle-end model of transformation, parallels similar transformative processes in other domains of change and challenge. McWhinney and Markos (2003) describe a three-stage transformative process of development -- (1) crisis, (2) passage liminality, and (3) reintegration -- that in anthropological terms occurs "in every culture as part of rites of passage from one social paradigm to the next" (p.21). In a more practical modern-day context, the Osborn-Parnes creative problem-solving process taught by the Creative Education Foundation at its annual Creative Problem-Solving Institute entails three stages that parallel the transformative path: (1) explore the problem, (2) generate ideas, and (3) prepare for action (Isaksen & Treffinger, 1985; Miller et al, 2003; Creative Education Foundation, 2004). Futurist George Ainsworth-Land (1992) describes recurring cycles of transformative and evolutionary change for organisms in terms of three stages: (1) forming, (2) norming, and (3) fulfilling.

Conclusion

This review of literature has covered three primary topics. First, I explored the nature and state of the nonprofit world in order to understand the demand for workers in nonprofit organizations, as well as possible situations and circumstances that might lead someone from the for-profit world to be challenged when transitioning to the nonprofit and sector. Second, I examined career development theory to understand the way that people make meaning of their careers. In particular, I reviewed literature on how people construct their understanding of career on the basis of subjective interpretations of their experience of work and employment. I reviewed several career metaphors to show how someone might subjectively refer to challenges at work, and discussed criteria that a person might use to determine career success. Third, I presented an overview of transformative learning theory, and as a way of helping understand how people shape their interpretations, reflect upon those that are no longer functional, and create new, more functional ways of looking at and behaving with the world around them.

The theories of transformative learning and subjective career development both apply to people from the for-profit world who change their careers to the nonprofit sector. In particular, three elements of transformative learning theory discussed by Mezirow (1978a) and embellished by him and others in subsequent literature, address important aspects of this study of such career changers. First, in exploring the challenges that for-profit workers face as they shift to the nonprofit sector, I identify the circumstance, situation, or condition immediately preceding the experience that a "challenge" has arisen. As described earlier in this paper, the process of transformation tends to begin as a result of a *disorienting dilemma,* also called a *trigger event (*Mezirow, 1994, Cranton, 1994*)*, that might be considered a *crisis* or *serious disruption in the status quo (*McWhinney and Markos, 2003*)*. In her research, Berger (2004) noted that participants at this threshold of meaning-making experienced a *sense of bewilderment* and when asked about the situation in an interview, a sudden *inability to answer questions.*

Disturbing life circumstances can arise that elude understanding within the context of one's current way of making sense of things. Such a consternating *disjuncture between past knowledge and current experience* (Jarvis 1987, p. 79) can create a *perspective disorientation,* where one is disassociated from previous ways of meaning-making (including how he/she has held personal identity, or life direction and purpose), and necessitates a "painful reappraisal" of past assumptions that do not seem to be working in the current situation. Interestingly, career change was one of the disorienting dilemmas mentioned by Mezirow's subjects in his first article on the topic (1978a).

*S*econd, this study explores the nature of the career changer's perceived "challenges" as articulated in the learner's self-expressed discourse regarding the differences they find between the for-profit and nonprofit environments. In this regard, transformative learning theory offers three domains of learning that help explain the process of transformation (Cranston, 1994): *instrumental learning,* a positivist orientation in which the subject examines the objective circumstances encompassed by the "challenge"; *communicative learning,* a constructivist

orientation in which the subject examines the premises upon which a given circumstance is interpreted and characterized as a "challenge"; and emancipatory *learning*, also a constructivist orientation, in which the subject examines the root belief systems that generated the premises upon which the subject originally came to interpret a given circumstance as a "challenge".

Emancipatory learning is described as the most complex domain (Cranton, 1994), because it starts when one has the realization that certain taken-for-granted "rules to live by" (i.e. expectations for traditional roles and behaviors set by external cultural norms and internal personal attitudes) have led unwittingly to self-imposed, self-limiting constraints. A*wareness*, however, is but the first step for emancipatory learning (Mezirow, 2000). The emancipatory learner reflects on *how* he/she is perceiving, thinking, judging, feeling or acting, as well as *why* he/she is having such experience, and then takes action accordingly. In this learning process, a circumstance that might on face value appear benign to the observer, becomes for the subject a potential source of alienation from society, and thus, a motivation not only for taking personal action, but also for taking more broadly defined public action as well. For example, for a number of participants in Mezirow's original study (all of whom were women), the career re-entry program brought into 'critical consciousness' unexamined cultural assumptions and attitudes about women in society. The participants became aware of being trapped in their own self-stereotyping which, in turn, led them to work toward being more self-actualized. As well, a change of job can stimulate the kind of critical reflection and action that is at the core of emancipatory learning (Cranton, 1994).

Third, this study explores the degree to which the career changers experience themselves "at cause" in the matter. *Agency (self-determination, self-direction)* is therefore the third relevant concept of perspective transformation that this study addresses. In that transformation of meaning perspectives can be a potentially self-actualizing process (see above), it holds the potential of generating a more autonomous, or *self-authoring* (Kegan, 2000) person. In transformative learning theory, autonomy suggests discovering (or recovering) one's inner

capacity to become more aware of one's own meaning perspective and meaning schemes, to engage reflectively on those perspective and schemes, to rationally examine their validity and create new perspectives and schemes if necessary, and to change one's corresponding actions, behaviors and feelings accordingly. As such, agency itself is a process of "becoming" within the process of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methodology I used in studying the lived experience of five people who formerly had a career in the for-profit world and who shifted their work and career to the nonprofit service sector. Specifically, I asked these career shifters to describe the circumstances of the shift they made from one sector to the other, what their experience was of those circumstances, and what that experience meant to them. Embedded in this inquiry were questions about the differences the participants experienced between the two worlds, what consternating impacts those differences had on their personal and professional identity, and to what degree and how such consternation was addressed, reconciled or resolved.

Conceptual Framework

As discussed in Chapter 2, toward the end of the 20th century, with corporations reshaping, restructuring, refocusing and resizing their enterprises, employees no longer were guaranteed a stable and smoothly continuous career path; thus emerged the boundaryless career metaphor. In this turbulent context of career, "to find meaning... people will have to 'make sense' of their constantly changing work agenda and integrate varied experiences into a coherent self-picture. Otherwise, the boundaryless career will seem aimless and could yield self-doubt and fragmentation" (Mirvis and Hall, 1994). The basic principles of transformative learning theory might be just the tools needed to address circumstances of subjective career development that don't make sense (a challenge to meaning-making) or that lead to a questioning of one's personal inner being (a challenge to self-identity).

The theories of *subjective career development* and *transformative learning* intersect in the conceptual orientation of "career" as a meaning-making and identity-defining life endeavor.

The patterns of interpretation of experiences relating to *career development* that subjective career theorists address, form what transformative learning theorists would call a *meaning perspective.* Within such a career-oriented meaning perspective, the interpretation of experience relating to various aspects of career development form *meaning schemes*, which are subsets of the larger meaning perspective. "Success," "right livelihood," "leadership role," "position and title," and "authority and seniority" are all good examples of meaning schemes within the larger meaning perspective of "career development."

As previously discussed, meaning schemes have both objective and subjective aspects. While this research is as concerned with the objective side of a given meaning scheme, it is the subjective aspects that hold greater relevance to interpretive, meaning-making of the experience. For example, in the case of career success, the objective aspects entail such data as salary level, professional position, level of resources controlled, and organizational/social roles and positions. These are the objective circumstantial signposts that will lead us to the interpretation of career success. In the subjective realm (where meaning is made), this study explores the informants' sense of self-worth as a function of their career to date: accomplishment for having "come this far" in their careers; an experience of security, motivation and inspiration; autonomy and control over their own destiny; and personal achievement (Inkson, 2007, p. 90).

The conceptual framework for this study is thus the intersection of two theoretical strands (*subjective career development* and *transformative learning*) placed in a particular *organizational context* (a shift from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector). The research empirically illuminates this theoretical crossroads by exploring the degree to which the career changers I interviewed characterize the differences they experienced between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors as challenges to their subjective understanding of career, and how they resolved those challenges through a shift in their meaning perspective regarding their own life, and their patterns of work and employment.

Research Questions

Given the conceptual framework described above, the following three questions formed the basis of the research for this study:

1. **How do people from the for-profit world become aware of and deal with the differences they experience when they shift their work and career focus to the nonprofit sector?**

    - What are the differences (how do they manifest)?
    - What do the study participants have to say about the differences?
    - What impacts do the study participants report that the differences have had on their personal beliefs, viewpoints, and behaviors about work and career (how do such impacts manifest in their lives)?

2. **How do the study participants deal with (i.e. respond to) the impacts of the differences**?

    - What motivates the study participants to address and resolve the differences?
    - What do they do to reconcile or resolve the differences (what happens)?
    - To what degree are the differences reconciled or resolved?

3. **As a result of their experience of this process, what changes, if any, do the study participants report with respect to their beliefs, viewpoints, and behaviors (i.e. What learning takes place during this process)?**

    - Do they report any changes in their view of Self.
    - Do they report any changes in their belief systems.
    - Do they reportedly changes in their responses, behaviors, and actions in their personal and work life.

Research Design Approach

At the intersection of the theories of subjective career development and transformative learning, *making sense* (or *making meaning*) of things is a matter of personal interpretation of experience (in this case, experience regarding "one's work over a lifetime"). At this experiential nexus, each individual will have his or her own way of *describing and characterizing* the general nature of things in the world of work and employment, a *perception* of what is happening to them

and around them in their career; and what and how they are *feeling* about those things. Moreover, as we learned from Mezirow's work (see Chapter 2), these descriptions, perceptions and feelings (i.e. manifestations of a "meaning perspective" and of "meaning schemes") are most likely to be based on a set of personal building blocks comprised of earlier interpretations of prior experience(s) of career.

This research into how people "make meaning" or "sense" of differences in their world was designed to accommodate the very uniquely personal and individual nature of the topic from the eyes of (i.e. as interpreted by) the actor whose experience is being studied. Such a study of unique personal experiences, conducted so as to glean understanding and knowledge about sense-making, suggests a qualitative (rather than quantitative) approach. That is, with *personal experience* at the heart of the research questions, the preferred approach to conducting the research (for me) was determined to be qualitative.

Qualitative research provides this study with the methodological tools for effectively exploring the way(s) that study participants perceive and describe their interactions with the world and resulting ambiguous complexities. Through the use of personal narrative as a valid expression of perceived reality, qualitative methods offer a creative and imaginative approach to understand the fluid and dynamic nature of human experience. And because, as the principal researcher, I recognize the degree to which my own worldview is part of the research process, it is important that qualitative methods accommodate the my own interpretation(s) as a valid factor in the study process (see Corbin, 2008, pp.12-14).

Qualitative research has been a preferred research method in connection with studies regarding subjective career development theory, especially for specific topics relating to sense-making. For example, qualitative research methods have been used to better understand the subjective notion of "career success" in order to identify workers' expectations, and to probe the larger career context in which career success is being conceptualized by workers (Heslin, 2005).

Overall Research Strategy

The qualitative research strategy I used for the study was primarily *phenomenological*. Phenomenological studies explore "social phenomena from the actors own perspectives, describing the world as experienced by the subjects, and with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be" (Kvale, 1996, p. 52). Phenomenological tools help us understand "how things appear to consciousness, often with the purpose of identifying the essential structures that characterize experience of the world" (Hammersley, 2004).

My research on the lived experience of people who have shifted their work and career from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector, is built on a conceptual framework structured around two pre-existing theoretical scaffolds (*subjective career development* and *transformative learning)* within the context of an *organizational environment*. Extensive empirical data has been gathered from many different real-world settings in connection with subjective career development phenomena, but I could find no studies that explicitly address subjective career theory in connection with career changers from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector. On the other hand, in the case of transformative learning theory, while a number of studies have been undertaken with a focus on career changes (see Taylor (2000) for a review of such studies), "the discussion has resided predominantly in a theoretical domain, with little attention offered from an empirical perspective [and]… little research published in educational journals" (Taylor, 2000, p.286). Thus, by embellishing and refining the existing theory base with empirical data for both subjective career development and transformative learning, my research elaborates existing theory in both realms.

Within the broad set of phenomenological research tools, two primary distinctions suggested the use of *narrative research* methodology. First, with respect to subjective career development theory, language is important in understanding how meaning is ascribed at work to situations, events, relationships, etc. Social constructivism in career development theory

addresses “how these meanings are reproduced, negotiated and transformed through social practice. Language lies at the core of such processes" (Cohen, at al, 2004, p. 411). Second, with respect to transformative learning, narrative methods are often used to evoke [through critical reflection] the assumptions that underlie a person's meaning perspective and meaning schemes (van Halen-Faber, 1997; Brookfield, 2000; Cohen & Piper, 2000).

In phenomenological research, data collection methods capture essential first-hand description or material evidence of the lived experience of the research participants regarding a given topic. This study, with its focus on the exploration of meaning-making and the interpretation of circumstances, events, and relationships regarding a certain phenomenon (a career shift from the for-profit world to the nonprofit service sector), required a data collection method that “focuses on the meanings that life experiences hold” (Warren and Karner, 2005, page 115).

The phenomenological genre of qualitative research anticipates an intense interactive relationship between the researcher, the informant, and the lived experience being studied. Given my own experience of 35 years as a senior nonprofit executive, it is no wonder that I found this approach to be personally compelling. I knew going into it that the research would expect my serious engagement with the people and the topic and “that through dialogue and reflection, the quintessential meaning of the experience [would] be revealed” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 97).

Of the many phenomenological data collection tools available (for examples, see Gubrium and Holstein, 2202; Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Rossman and Rallis, 2003), I used the *interview method* which I define as an interaction between researcher and respondent (also called “informant” (Spradley, 1979) or “participant” (Seidman, 2006)) intended to elicit useful factual information, interpretation, or evidence of socio-cultural constructions to a given research topic. More explicitly, I built my data collection approach around Seidman's model (see Seidman, 2006) for in-depth phenomenological interviewing, as outlined later in this chapter.

The in-depth qualitative interview is the form that best fit the purposes of my research. According to Kvale (1996), the postmodern approach to interviewing rests on four theoretical pillars: *social construction* (the interview is a "construction site" for gaining knowledge about the nature and meaning of "reality" as interpreted and understood by the actor); *hermeneutics* (the study of interpretation in order to understand meaning); *phenomenological description* (understanding social phenomena has precisely expressed by, and through the eyes of the primary actor); and *dialectical situating* (the study of expressed or enacted contradictions as a way of shaping an understanding the meaning of circumstances, actions, values and relationships within a given context) (see Kvale, 1996, pp. 38-58). These are precisely the foundations on which the data collection of my research process was conducted.

Data Sources

Identifying the informant sample

In order to assure objectivity in the selection of research participants for this study, third - party nominators were identified who could recommend individuals they knew who had made the transition from the for-profit to the nonprofit world (and who thus might meet the criteria for participation in the study). A nominating individual would have extensive first-hand familiarity with a wide range of professionals within either a given nonprofit field or a specific geographic territory. Nominators were contacted from among the following entities (names of specific nominators are listed in parentheses):

- Organizations that directly serve or support individuals who are making the career transition from the for-profit to the nonprofit world (e.g. Bridgestar; Encore.org; Civic Ventures, etc.).
- Professional societies and associations in the nonprofit fields (e.g. American Association of Museums; Connecticut Association of Nonprofits, etc.).
- Funding, advocacy, and management support organizations that work extensively with nonprofit organizations (e.g. Associated Grantmakers of Massachusetts; Technical Development Corporation of Boston, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, etc.).

- Consulting firms or independent consultants whose clients are predominantly nonprofit organizations (e.g. People'sWorth).
- Individuals whose current or former position gives them particular knowledge and familiarity of the target cohort of potential participants (e.g. a [former] mayor, or Chamber of Commerce executive director, etc.).

I contacted a number of nominators by email and telephone. I explained the purpose and general nature of the study, described the kinds of individuals I was looking to include in the study, and requested names and contact information of individuals the nominator thought might be qualified to serve as research participants.

Very few viable candidates were identified in this manner: the nominators either had no direct knowledge of potential research participants who fit the desired qualifications, or they simply did not respond back to my inquiry. In one case, a well-known national consulting firm whose practice serves career shifters was not comfortable in sharing with me the names of any of their clients.

The nominator process as I originally intended it yielded only three candidates who ultimately became research participants. The other two research participants came to the study almost serendipitously when I attended a local monthly Chamber of Commerce breakfast. Before the business meeting began, I was describing my dissertation to others sitting at my table. One person at the table (the CEO of a nonprofit organization) gave me the contact information for one of her senior staff members whom she thought might be a good match for the study. A local banker sitting next to me at the same table pointed to a gentlemen sitting across from me and said, "He's a nonprofit guy who came from the business world. Why don't you talk with him!" Both of these two referenced individuals ultimately became research participants for this study!

Sample selection (Finding qualified research participants)

Given that certain structural and social circumstances would have to be at play for participants for this research, it was important to establish a sampling strategy that was purposeful; that is I needed explicit criteria and "reasons (purposes) for selecting specific participants, events, or processes" (Rossman and Rallis , 2003, p.137). For example, I anticipated

that the selected individuals participating in this study would have already made the career shift from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector. I was not concerned with people who were only "thinking about" or "might be interested in" making the shift at some future point in time. In addition, because this study is about work and career, the sample would not include people who are now serving in a voluntary capacity in the nonprofit world (for example, helping a nonprofit as part of their retirement).

I anticipated that the career changers selected to participate in this study would have worked previously in the for-profit sector for a sufficient enough period of time so as to have identified themselves as having a career (i.e. not just a passing job) in the for-profit sector, and a demonstrated commitment to the values and norms of commercial enterprises. As well, I expected that the career changers in this study would have been working in the nonprofit environment for a sufficient enough period of time so as to consider themselves as professional members of the nonprofit sector. This would increase the likelihood that they could offer in-depth narrative as to their experience of any differences between the two sectors that might have become personally challenging.

I did *not* need assurances that the career changers participating in the study expected to remain in the nonprofit sector for the rest of their careers, or indeed, for any specific length of time. I felt that their return to the for-profit sector at some future time would not affect the findings of my research.

To assure that the above listed social, cultural, and professional expectations were met, I created a questionnaire (see Figure 3.1) to be used as a structured protocol to screen potential candidates. However, as I spoke at length by telephone with each of the ten or so potential study participants, the questionnaire became more of a guideline than a form to complete.

Figure 3.1
Prequalification Questionnaire

From your current perspective…

Do you consider that you once had a career in the for-profit world?

- If yes…, please describe your experience
- In those days, what profession(s) did you say you were in?

As of today, do you consider that you have now shifted your career to the nonprofit service sector?

- Approximately how long since you have made the shift?
- How permanent do you characterize the shift?
- If a friend introduces you to someone in a casual context, what professional field do you say you are in?

How different would you say your career in the nonprofit service sector is compared to your career in the for-profit business world?

No Difference				Extremely Different
1	2	3	4	5

Please explain your response.

Will you be willing to talk openly with me about the difference(s) – what they are, how you feel about them, the impact they have had on you?

If not, why not?

Name of candidate

Contact Information
Date administered:

In making my selection, I sought a "range of variation" (Seidman, 2006, page 53). I wanted variety in professional fields, and types of organizations the individual had worked for, both in the for-profit world (before the career shift) and in the nonprofit sector (after the career shift. I also wanted to find people with a variety of circumstances in their personal lives over the course of their respective career shifts, and to make sure they would be comfortable in sharing with me the details of those circumstances, including their associated affect.

Most important, however, I wanted to be as certain as I could in advance that selected research participants sufficiently understood both the for-profit world and the nonprofit service sector, such that they were aware of (either *a priori* or when asked) the differences between the two sectors, and whether or not those differences had resulted in personally challenging impacts. I needed to be comfortable that a given candidate would be able and willing to describe to me (i.e. speak freely about; candidly share their story of) the circumstances surrounding their experiences of career change, the impacts that have resulted from the differences, and whatever actions they have taken to address those impacts.

I had originally expected to select six to ten research participants, but as the process of dragged on for several weeks with few prospects emerging, I decided to use the five "most promising" candidates who best seemed to fit the criteria I had established for the sample. The backgrounds of these individuals are described in depth at the start of Chapter 4.

Data Collection (Interviews)

For this study, I designed, conducted and audio-recorded a series of *in-depth interviews* with the five selected individuals who had made a career shift from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector. The interview process described in this section was intended to elicit through narrative description, (a) the worldview perspectives that shaped the study participants' experience prior to, during and following the career shift they had made, and (b) the

meaning(s) they made of the differences they encountered between the two work/career environments.

I found that in-depth interviewing has both strengths and weaknesses as a data collection method. As for benefits, in-depth interviews yield data based on real-time (in person or on the phone) interactions; provide compelling opportunities to reveal deeply held perspectives and worldviews; help to reveal nuances in an individual's lived experience; and result in narrative data that can be transcribed and coded for analysis relatively easily.

In-depth interviewing can also present certain limitations. Interview narratives are subject to multiple interpretations, by interviewee, by interviewer, and by the reader of the study output. As well, in-depth interviewing (a) relies on a relatively small sample of people, thus generating descriptions of lived experiences that may not necessarily apply to larger populations; (b) may raise sensitive personal issues that discomfort the participant respondents; (c) requires that participants be fully open and honest; and (d) depends on the sensitivity and creativity of the researcher to identify root issues or themes that may be embedded within the data (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, pp. 134 to 135).

Interview Design

The interview process I originally designed was a variant of Seidman's model for *in-depth phenomenological interviewing* (Seidman, 2006). In Seidman's model, three interviews are conducted:

> "The first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them. (Seidman, 2006, page 17).

The first interview – *exposition* – is a "focused life history" where the respondent is asked "to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time" (Seidman, 2006, page 17). The primary question in this interview is "how", not "why". The

objective is to encourage the respondent to "reconstruct and narrate a range of constitutive events in their past" (*ibid*).

The second interview – *elaboration* -- focuses on "the concrete details of the participants present lived experience in the topic area of the study" (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). Questions in this interview address detailed accounts of circumstances and rituals, relationships etc.

The third interview in the Seidman model – *meaning* -- asks the "participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience... the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants work and life" (Seidman, 2006, page 19). The questions that are asked during this interview are designed to bring together the life story of interview #1 and the details of interview #2 as source material for the participant to reflect on the meaning of their lives.

A parallel construct for interviewing is described by Atkinson (2002) in his article on life story interviewing. For Atkinson, each life story has three components that comprise its complexity: (1) the content of the story, (2) how the story is constructed, and (3) the meaning of the story (see Atkinson, 2002, p. 133).

My interview design going into the data collection phase blended the models of Seidman and Atkinson (i.e. history/content➔detail/story-construction➔meaning) with a variant for the second interview, as follows:

> Interview #1: *Exposition* (see Appendix B): A description in the informant's own words of the circumstances and situations in connection with the career shift they have made from the for-profit to the nonprofit world:
>
> - the participant's career in the for-profit world;
> - the moment [time] when the participant first thought about (considered) shifting away from the for-profit world;
> - the moment [time] when the participant finally acknowledged that s/he had shifted his/her career to the nonprofit service sector;
> - what happened as the participant actually made the shift; and
> - how the participant feels these days about his/her career in the nonprofit sector.

Interview #2: *Elaboration*: Further details on the story told in the first interview, keying in on metaphorical references expressed in the first interview (see "Data measures" below for more detail on the use of metaphor as a key to stimulate elaborative narrative).

- "Tell me more about [using your superpowers for good]…"
- "What did you mean when you said [that job was a battleground]?"
- "Please explain how these [several] metaphorical references relate to one another."

Interview #3: *Interpretation*: an opportunity for the respondents to reflect on their life story as a means of understanding the meaning of their current perspectives, feelings, and behaviors.

- "What does all this mean to you?"
- "How do you now explain the career shift?"
- "How did you make sense of all of this?"
- "How did you reconcile those contradictions you mentioned?"

I envisioned that, ideally, the interviews would take place in the work environment of the participants; that, in keeping with Seidman's model, the interviews would last approximately 90 minutes each; and that I would space the interviews a week or 10 days apart, so that the total process for each participant would be approximately 3 weeks. Of course, I anticipated that the specific timing would depend on the availability of the participants to work within the logistical parameters I laid out for them.

Conducting the interviews

I was able to follow the interview design fairly closely to its original intention. As shown in Table 3.1, 17 interviews were conducted with the five research participants between January and September 2010. The interviews for each participant ranged from a total of over three hours to nearly 6 hours, and I spent an aggregate of nearly 20 hours with the five participants. The time span for completing all three interviews was significantly extended form the Seidman model due to (a) the busy work schedules of the participants, (b) the length of time it took to transcribe each interview, and (c) the preparation time I needed between interviews #2 and #3.

The interviews were all recorded digitally using either an Iriver ®MP3 player/recorder (for in person interviews) or through the telephone recording feature of freeconferencecall.com conferencing service (for telephone interviews). When all the interviews had been transcribed, I had collected over 300 pages of narrative data.

Table 3.1
Schedule of Interviews

Participant Interview	Interview Date	Length of Interview: Each in Minutes	Length of Interview: Total Hours Per person	Transcription Pages
B1	7-Jan-10	90		21
B2	15-Jan-10	90		22
B3	28-Apr-10	105		24
B4	17-Sep-10	66	5.85	16
D1	15-Jan-10	75		22
D2	29-Jan-10	60		15
D3	6-May-10	31		6
D4	14-Oct-10	34	3.33	9
J1	25-Jan-10	75		33
J2	30-Apr-10	49		11
J3	31-Aug-10	57	3.02	14
P1	21-Jan-10	82		26
P2	21-Apr-10	90		19
P3	30-Aug-10	55	3.78	16
V1	22-Apr-10	75		25
V2	15-Sep-10	76		20
V3	22-Sep-10	60	3.52	16
	Total Minutes	**1170**		315
	Total Hours		**19.5**	

I was able to follow the three-interview strategy for three of the five research participants. For the other two participants, I found that a fourth interview was necessary, because in one case (B1-4) , she was the first person I interviewed and my interviewing skills were not yet honed; and in the second case (D 1-4), his schedule did not allow for completing the third interview in one phone call. My interview time with one participant (B1-4) was significantly longer than the others for

two reasons; first, I was not yet comfortable with my own interviewing skills when I started the process (she was the first person to be interviewed), and second, she simply seems to have a lot more to say than the other four participants.

I had originally expected to conduct the interviews where the research participants worked, but the participants' respective locations (distance for me to travel) and their work schedules made that a difficult proposition to fulfill. I did conduct several of the early interviews at the offices of some of the participants, and then conducted subsequent interviews by telephone to see if the responses were degraded. Perhaps because of their personalities, or due to my interview style, or because of the favorable personal relationship that evolved between me and the interviewees, I found the research participants' responses to be open and forthcoming regardless of the channel used for the data collection. By the last interviews, I felt confident that the telephone interviews were generating pithy, salient, and powerful research results (see Chapters 4 and 5).

As for my own experience as an interviewer, going into the interview process, I knew that during these in-depth phenomenological interviews, I would play a blend of both passive and active roles as the interviewer, during the interview phase of the study, as well as in the post-interview data analysis and reporting phases of the study. As a *passive neutral participant*, the interviewer stands separately and independently not only from the individuals being interviewed, but also with respect to the data being gathered. In this objectivist context, the researcher's job is "to promote the expression of actual attitudes and information that lie in waiting in the respondent's vessel of answers" (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002, p. 14). Such an interviewer should be knowledgeable but not intrusive of the topic being discussed; a gentle and sensitive rapport-builder and listener; and open and nonreactive to whatever the respondent says (Kvale, 1996, pp. 148-149).

On the other hand, the *active phenomenological interviewer*, is directly engaged in the knowledge-producing activity that is embedded within the interview process; a person who, like

the interviewee, also constructs meaning through interpretation. As such, "the subject behind the interviewer is seen as actively and unavoidably engaged in the interactional co-construction of the interview's content" (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002, p. 14). In this more subjective context, the active interviewer can't help but place some degree of structure onto the interview; choose the language of the questions being asked to direct the conversation; steer the interview in a direction that he/she feels is appropriate to the purpose of the study; and at times, give interpretive feedback during the interview that critically tests the interviewee's responses (Kvale, 1996, pp. 148-149).

With 35 years of senior experience in a variety of nonprofit and public sector settings, and seven years as a doctoral candidate, I found myself seesawing back and forth between two roles. On one hand, I had to constantly monitor myself not to get engaged as a peer colleague to the interviewees; and occasionally, I admit that I slipped over to their side of the table and started sharing my own professional stories with them. But on the other hand, the scholar in me usually caught myself, apologized to the interviewee for going off track, and returned to a more *diligent* and *systematic* (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p.177) interviewer role. After reviewing the transcripts of the interviews, I could see clearly where these two roles came into play, and after-the-fact, I believe that I was able to recover from any detrimental impact that may have occurred as a result of any overly intrusive interview technique on my part.

I will also add in conclusion to the section, that my years of experience in the nonprofit world shaped the direction and focus of my questioning in the second (elaboration) and third (interpretation) interviews. It was as if I could see where the conversation was headed without really knowing exactly what the outcomes would be (until, of course, I read the transcripts). In this regard, it was a heady process because for all the years that I worked in the nonprofit sector, the most interesting moments came when people would share their experience of having a career

in the nonprofit world. When reading over the transcripts (see next section) I became extremely grateful for the way in which the research participants opened up to me during our time together.

Data Types: Objective and Subjective

(*examples in this section are drawn from quotes found in Chapters 4 and 5)*

The interview process elicited three types of data as manifested in the results (Chapter 4) and analysis (Chapter 5) of this study. The first is *objective data* as expressed by the respondent. These include factual descriptions of events (*After 13 years in the newspaper business…*); artifacts in the respondents' lives (*We've got some goats and we've got some chickens*); names or titles of people, groups, and organizations with whom the respondents have interacted (*My father was minister and his father was a minister*); and career-related data such as positions and titles held, academic and professional training completed, and financial and human resources managed, etc. (*I entered as a consultant; then I became a senior consultant; then I became a senior manager*).

The second type of data is the *subjective responses* of the interviewee. Subjective responses are likely to represent or describe the respondents' experience of objective data, and are characterized by stories, characterizations, and feelings about things, circumstances, situations, and relationships; (*I was relieved… It totally appealed to me…; I loved the business, but I didn't feel I wanted to be doing it forever…*). Subjective responses are interpretive in nature and therefore often reflect the social and cultural constructs that the respondent uses to make meaning of their world.

The third type of data that the interviewees shared was *reflective* in nature. Unlike objective and subjective responses which are made in real time (in and of the topic or moment at hand), reflective responses are often declarations of personal meaning, or explanations of personal worldviews, as well as expressed values and beliefs with a focus on "how I think the world works" spoken in a timeless context , as in, *If you're going to be a nonprofit [organization], you've got to be doing it for rational quantifiable impact that benefits society*

[taken from one of the interviews – see Chapter 4]. By its very nature as a phenomenological study, my research focused on the subjective responses and reflective declarations that emerged during the interview process as reported in Chapters 4 and 5.

Data Measures and Cues: The Use of Metaphor

Metaphor constructs and metaphorical language expressed by the respondents during the interviews proved to be important *markers* and *measures* for responses, and served as *cues* to guide my interviewing, especially in the second (elaboration) and third (interpretation) phases of the data collection process. "Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 36). Metaphor is pervasive in our language, and as such, provides effective data cues in conducting the interviews and in analyzing the interview narratives. Indeed, "metaphors partially structure our everyday concepts and this structure is reflected in our literal language" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 46). For Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are more than a fundamental systemic construct for both expressing and understanding constructed reality; metaphors are also a powerful connector of positivist objectivism and interpretive subjectivism.

> "Since the categories of our everyday thoughts are largely metaphorical and our everyday reasoning involves metaphorical entailment and inferences, ordinary rationality is therefore imaginative by its very nature… Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness. These endeavors of the imagination are not devoid of rationality; since they use metaphor, they employ an imaginative rationality" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 193).

As predicted before the data collection began, the in-depth phenomenological interview technique elicited three types of metaphorical responses: (a) *career metaphors*; (b) *organizational metaphors*; and (c) *common-language metaphors*. The reader will recall from the literature review in Chapter 2, I suggested that the *career metaphor* typology developed by Inkson (2007) would likely arise during interviews in the data collection phase of the study (see

Table 2.2 for selected metaphorical references). In Table 3.2, I include all of the major metaphor

Table 3.2
Metaphorical References Related To Career
(Examples taken from interviews reported in Chapters 4 and 5)
(Categories from Inkson (2007)

Career as…	Metaphorical Statement
Inheritance	*[Working for good] was very deeply ingrained in me. I just accepted [what my family was saying] without a lot of thought…*
Cycles	*At several points along the way, I interviewed at big law firms, as law students do.*
Action	*I jumped into the abyss of going from corporate to nonprofit, not really knowing what that meant.*
Protean	*I mean, I was all juiced up. So I was thinking, "You know, like, I could do this."*
Boundaryless	*The skill sets I had developed in the world of newspapers were going to be easily transferable.*
Story	*I was there [in the business world] for 30 years… I don't want to sound in any way smug… or self-righteous about having, kind of escaped the whorehouse.*
Journey	*It was like I had walked into nonprofit land, and all I could hear was the whispering of the desert wind*
Roles	*I went from being one of the Indians to the chief of this operation.*
Fit	*I had a job; but passion-wise, this was not it.*
Resources	*… which is something big firms do when they are trying to increase the pot for the big rainmakers.*
Repository of knowledge	*I knew the nonprofit sector, but I didn't know publishing.*
Creative process	*There was an opportunity to fill needs, to bring expertise, experience and ideas into an area that was somewhat of a vacuum*

categories presented by Inkson (2007), and note how each category actually manifested in the interviews (quotes from Chapters 4 and 5).

Organizational metaphors typically will fall within one of the categories that Morgan's (1997) typology in developing his concept of metaphor as the basis for theories of organization and management:

> The use of metaphor implies a *way of thinking* and a *way of seeing* that pervade how we understand our world generally... The metaphor frames our understanding... in a distinctive and yet partial way.... It can create powerful insights but also become distortions, as the way of seeing created through a metaphor becomes a way of not seeing" (italics as written; Morgan, 1997, pp.4 -5).

Table 3.2 shows examples of literal metaphorical references regarding organizational and management context that arose in the interview process (taken from quotes in Chapters 4 and 5).

Beyond the career and organizational metaphor, the respondents told their stories using *common language metaphors*. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) present a compelling argument for noticing that much of our everyday storytelling language is metaphorical in nature; and so it was that during their interviews, the respondents consistently described their experience metaphorically, using ordinary language. Table 3.4 shows examples of metaphors that actually arose (taken from quotes in Chapters 4 and 5).

Table 3.3
Metaphorical References Related To Organizations and Management
(Examples taken from interviews reported in Chapters 4 and 5)
(Categories from Morgan (1997))

Organizations as…	Metaphorical Statement
Machines	*It started to sort of come apart because the founder was very strong-willed and would not… give up control…*
Organisms	*I didn't [want to] get into that big fish corporate world*
Brains	*I see the match [between]the for-profit being able to organize and mobilize, and the nonprofit being able to think more in the long term.*
Cultures	*That was a very formative piece of learning for me… You learn when to speak and when to hide.*
Political systems	*Trying to make sure that we have an organization that is responsive to all the different constituencies is just really, really exciting.*
Psychic prisons	*To some degree, you become a victim of your own success … in a way, the business punished you for success… I mean, you could never let go of that kind of future consequence for today's good effort.*
Flux and transformation	*There is a train wreck scenario, where if we have a really bad annual appeal at the end of the year, we might have to let people off, or cut back on programs.*
Instruments of domination	*I think a lot of people literally feel like indentured servants*

Table 3.4
Common Language Metaphors
(Examples taken from interviews reported in Chapters 4 and 5)

Situation as:	Metaphorical Statement
Activity	*My siblings and I kind of just muddled through in our respective paths and careers.*
War	*I would be more comfortable fighting your fight for you than fighting my fight for me.*
Orderliness	*The notion of working as a nonprofit person in some social services kind of context [was]... very compatible with me.*
Location	*In order to get off the ground, I need to have investors.*
Engine	*Sometimes the mission just can become like a steamroller*
Physical position	*What I like is not being in an adversarial posture anymore.*
Environment	*Be prepared to be among people who don't understand the business landscape.*
Balance/Equilibrium	*It was a three-day indoctrination… total sensory overload.*
Food; Eating	*It was a pretty sweet financial deal.* *That's interesting, but it doesn't feed the soul... and it may or may not feed the pocketbook.*
Physical Structure	*I try to find commonality.. to bring people together rather than tear them apart*
Container	*I was back in a hole, chasing people [who] were never going to call [me] back.*
Relationship	*I think a lot of people feel like indentured servants.*

Transcription process

I want to say a few words here about how I went about having the data (which was recorded on electronic digital media), converted to the written word. The transcription of interview responses is a key element of the research process. Unfortunately, it is often overlooked in these studies as a subject to report.

A number of colleagues shared with me their various approaches to having interview data transcribed. Almost no one shared with me a pleasant story. Either the process was excruciatingly tedious (for those who did their own transcribing); extraordinarily costly (for those who hired professional transcription services); or painfully unacceptable (for those who tried to save themselves the effort and expense by hiring a typist they knew).

I started my own process by transcribing, on my own, the first hour-long interview that I conducted. I knew how to play back the digital files using ExpressScribe ® dictation /transcription software and thought it would go easily. It took me six excruciatingly tedious hours to transcribe one hour of digital audio. This was neither pleasant nor acceptable.

I researched the time and cost of hiring a professional transcription service. Typically, these are firms that specialize in transcription of legal depositions or market research focus group meetings. I searched on-line and found quotes of $90 per audio hour (quote in 2010). With nearly 20 hours of audio files, I could not afford the $1800 fee.

I then spoke with a fellow doctoral candidate who had hired a local office assistant at $17 per hour to transcribe the interviews he had conducted for his dissertation research. It took this typist up to five hours to transcribe one audio hour (that's up to $85 per audio hour), and the results were riddled with errors. I decided not to go this route.

Lastly, one of my colleagues who is immersed in the on-line experience suggested that I register with oDesk® a global online clearinghouse for people who provide online business services, including transcription. I signed up with oDesk.com (at no cost), and posted a brief job

listing for my transcription assignment. Within 24 hours, over 140 individuals from all over the world had responded with messages in my oDesk inbox! While most of these respondents were clearly unqualified to handle the assignment (no experience, poor English fluency, low scores on office skills tests, etc.), I did identify 10 candidates who seemed to be likely prospects for doing the job; they were from India, Singapore, the Philippines, the United States, and Jamaica. Their fees ranged from $5 to $25 to transcribe each audio hour. I could not believe it!

In order to identify the best candidate, I decided to send out a short test file to each of the finalists. Using Goldwave® audio editing software, I split several of my interview audio files into ten separate 15-minute clips. Each of the finalists agreed to transcribe one of these audio clips for $5. Each also signed a confidentiality statement regarding the data they were to transcribe.

I challenged each candidate to return the transcribed audio segment quickly, by saying that I would hire the first one who produced a completely acceptable result. I uploaded the files to the candidates through oDesk, and within a day or two, I received 8 of the transcriptions back. The results were remarkable across the board in terms of word accuracy. However, I noticed immediately that the transcriptions prepared by the candidates from outside of the United States were poorly punctuated with the words strung together; almost impossible to read for comprehension. On the other hand, the transcriptions from the United States transcribers were punctuated for proper conversational syntax, and were very readable. In the end, I selected a woman from the Atlanta region who transcribed the remaining audio files with great timeliness, accuracy, and competent punctuation. For her excellent work, I gladly paid her a bonus above and beyond her very low fee. My total cost for transcribing 20 hours of audio files, came to about $400. (NOTE: As of May 2011, this transcriber's rate was $30. or more per audio hour).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Conceptual Framework

Going into the data analysis and interpretation phase of the study, I used van Manen's (1990) conceptual approach as my guide; that is, I intended to analyze and interpret the data by identifying common themes within the transcribed story narrative text. I expected that such themes would reveal fundamental emergent structures of experience that would serve to orient the complexity of situations, feelings, behaviors, etc. expressed by respondents.

A theme helps us focus on the essence of an experience, but the theme is not the experience itself. According to van Manen (1990), a theme is more of a reflection of insightful invention, discovery, and disclosure on the part of the researcher, used to give focus, shape and meaning to the underlying phenomenological experience (see van Manen, 1990, pp. 87-89).

I had expected to examine categories and themes in the context of van Manen's (1990) typology of *lifeworld existentials.* This typology is a hermeneutic tool (a "guide to reflection") that understands the lived world as a fabric in which *body*, *space*, *time*, and *relation to other* are intricately woven. The four lifeworld existentials described by van Manen (1990) encompass a fundamental and comprehensive range of dimensions for phenomena (i.e. logical themes) in lived experience:

> **Lived space (spatiality)**. Space can be physical and mathematical (i.e. a location, boundary set or distance), but also, space can be subjective, as in the pre-verbal *experience of place* and how one feels about it. Subjective experiences of space often set the context of one's identity (e.g. feeling spiritual in a cathedral; feeling at one with nature in a park; feeling "at home"). As such, "lived space is a category for inquiring into the ways we experience the affairs of our day to day existence; in addition it helps us uncover more fundamental meaning dimensions of lived life" (Van Manen, 1990, page 103).
>
> **Lived body (corporeality).** The body places one in the physical landscape, by housing all of one's senses to experience that landscape. Thus, the body is our way both of *being* in the world, as well as of *belonging* in (i.e. making sense of our relationship to) the

world. The lived body holds our yearnings and our identity in the context of lived experience. (See Hyde, 2005, p.38-39).

Lived time (temporality). The landscape of experience occurs within the horizons of past, present, and future; but one's experience of the past is ever changing (depending on one's experience of the present, i.e. how things have turned out), and one's anticipation of the future is ever changing (given that one's experience of the present tends to shift one's hopes and expectations for the future). Thus, the lifeworld existential of "lived time" is subjective and not "clock time or objective time" (Van Manen, 1990, p.104).

Lived other (relationality). We maintain a lived relation with others in the interpersonal space that we share with them. Our initial relationships may start with the body (e.g. eye contact, handshake, hug), but as time progresses, our relationships transcend the physical. "In a larger existential sense human beings have searched in this experience of the other, the communal, the social for a sense of purpose in life, meaningfulness, grounds for living" (van Manen, 1990, p. 105).

van Manen's typology was valuable in shaping the interview protocol of this research by helping me organize questions along the lines of the four aspects of lifeworld existentials thereby encompassing the core elements of lived experience. For example:

Where did that happen? How did you feel being *there?* (spatiality)

What was going on *with you?* How did that affect *you? (*corporeality)

When did that happen? At what *stage of life* did you find yourself? (temporality)

Who was there at the time? What was *your relationship with that group*? (relationality)

In the next section and again in Chapter 5, I revisit Van Manen's framework in connection with analysis and interpretation of data.

What Actually Happened

Ultimately, a *deeply immersive* style of data analysis and interpretation (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 270) proved to be most fruitful. My initial effort at coding (marking the text with codes in a systematic linear fashion, working paragraph-by-paragraph through each interview) yielded few insights for me. I decided that a coding strategy of this kind was simply not suited to my personal creative style (I work best with a jump-around, non-linear approach). However, this early approach to coding the data was not entirely unproductive, as it led me to begin an iterative

process of reading and re-reading the 300+ pages of transcripts. For several months, my binder of transcripts went everywhere with me. The pages became dog-eared and filled with marginal comments; dozens of yellow sticky notes stuck out from the edges. It was a completely manual process.

Over time, I began to see connections and commonalities that the research participants were expressing in connection with certain similar issues and topics. At some point, I started extracting extended quotations from the transcripts where sections of text (words, phrases, sentences, etc.) reflected common themes in connection related to the research questions. I was reminded of Seidman's (2006) description of certain aspects of lived experience that he watches for in preparing transcribed material for analysis and interpretation:

> I am alert to conflict, both between people and within a person. I respond to hopes expressed and whether they are fulfilled or not. I am alert to language that indicates beginnings, middles, and ends of processes. I am sensitive to frustrations and resolutions, indications of isolation and the more rare expressions of collegiality and community. I am sensitive to the way issues of class, ethnicity, and gender play out in individual lives, and the way hierarchy and power affect people (Seidman, 2006, p. 118).

As my compendium of extended quotes became larger and larger, and the categories into which I placed them became more and more complex, I experienced what I can only call "data overload." My efforts to structure the themes around Van Manen's framework of lifeworld existentials, or the practical context of my three research questions, or for that matter <u>any</u> structure at all seemed hopelessly out of my control. Nothing made sense and I felt momentarily lost. It was an anxious period of time, and with the encouragement of my dissertation committee chair and faculty members, I continued to prepare outlines, drafts and re-drafts of a potential analysis. As I persisted, the iterative and evolutionary process of analysis revealed a variety of emergent themes, some of which had application across some of the data, but none of which proved to encompass the wide variety of experiences being reported by the research participants.

Then, one day, while reading (re-reading for the "nth" time) a quotation by one of the research participants that I found particularly poignant, I reached what my dissertation committee chair later called a moment of "data saturation," in which all of the prior methodical study that I had applied to the data came into focus in a profound all-encompassing insight. I experienced an intellectual coalescing of all the textual and conceptual strands that I had been playing with for several months. All of a sudden, all of the data came together into a clear thematic pattern that is reported and fully explained in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

In that single instant, given how long I had been struggling with the analysis, the social science that I had been methodically and diligently applying to the data resulted in an overarching finding that was surprisingly unexpected -- an *Ahah! m*oment. In hindsight, I know it was not magic happening, but rather the exhilaration that comes from authentic and serious social science practice – a feeling that I had only heard about from others, but had never myself felt. It was the kind of experience that makes the years of doctoral study so worthwhile!

Limitations

Several limitations are at play in this study of career changers. As an exploratory work, this research only touches the surface of the issues that are raised in Chapters 4 and 5. As such, the results and analysis hint at conclusions that can be considered valid if they resonate in the heart and mind of the reader as being true. But I would hesitate to extrapolate objective generalizations from this work alone. Below are several additional specific limitations and some ideas for addressing these limitations in future studies.

First and foremost, I was dealing with subjective material from the study participants, which I myself analyzed. As such, the study's findings and analysis have been filtered through a host of perspectives, and socio-cultural lenses of both the participants and the primary researcher (i.e. me). Many of the limitations of this work thus derive from the qualitative nature of the research.

I would welcome further *quantitative* psychometric research that might confirm or refute the findings of this study.

Second, I was not able to embed myself personally and directly into the lives of the career changers as they made the shift in their work and careers from the for-profit world to the nonprofit service sector, nor even in their current lives as nonprofit executives. I feel comfortable that the in-person and telephone interviews yielded valid results, but these findings were not tested beyond the words spoken by the participants. Further ethnographic or longitudinal first-hand research might yield a beneficial complement to this work.

Third, as a 35 year veteran of the very field being studied, I could not completely unblend my own biases from the research process. In reading through the transcripts of the interviews, I notice just how much of my own experience played into the comments I made along the way as I asked certain questions. I would be fascinated to see this study replicated by a young researcher with an interest in the topic, but with less practical professional experience (and accompanying baggage) in the field of nonprofit management.

Lastly, I discerned several limitations of the research in the realm of a category one might call *I don't know what I don't know:*

- Certain objective circumstances at play in the life and environment of the career changers may not have been mentioned in the interviews (e.g. marital problems, a death in the family, illness, etc.);
- Certain subjective biases of the participants' may have been at play but were not obviously revealed.
- The research methodology assumed that the research participants would be able to describe their behaviors and feelings by reflecting on them when, in fact, those behaviors and feelings might be totally outside the conscious realm of the participant.

Whatever limitations were present, I believe that the interview process yielded interesting narratives from which consistent themes emerged, thus shedding light on the intersection between subjective career theory and transformative learning. In this context, I used what Titchen and Hobson (2005) call the *direct* approach of phenomenology in which the research illuminates the *foreground* of the phenomenon in question. In the foreground, the researcher engages in "a systematic study of participants' mental representations of the phenomenon as they experience it.. [asking] participants questions about their rational actions, exploring their underpinning logic, intentions, choices, decisions, and so on" (p.121). I acknowledge and admit that as a researcher using such a direct approach, I was situated *outside* of the actual experience of the phenomenon. Nonetheless, I am confident that my recording and analysis of the participants' stories of their experience sheds valuable light onto the nature of that experience.

Conclusion

I believe that the root cause of the projected leadership deficit in the nonprofit service sector (see Chapter 1) is cultural in nature; and that to reduce that deficit, the field will need higher levels of "cultural intelligence" in both sectors, and greater "cultural competence" on the part of those from the for-profit world who are making the transition to more active nonprofit leadership roles. I contend that by studying how each of the cultures – nonprofit and for-profit -- is perceived by the other, and how people in each sector respond and react to the cultural distinctions they encounter with respect to the other sector, my research will ultimately generate significantly greater understanding between and among the two worlds. Such understanding will result in a more welcoming nonprofit environment in which people from the for-profit world can more comfortably and competently become effective leaders.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I report on data from the interviews I conducted with the five individuals who participated in this study, starting with a descriptive introduction of each participant. The information I present in this chapter is organized along the same lines as the interview process itself, where I asked the participants to describe (a) what happened as they made the transition from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector, (b) their experience of what happened, and (c) what they learned from that experience. As shown in Table 4.1, each of three interview components yielded its own kind of data output, namely: (a) the narrative story of what happened (that is, the sequence of events); (2) recollections of personal affect in connection with their unfolding story (that is, how they felt about what happened to and around them); and (3) reflective conclusions about what happened to them (i.e. their own opinions, and the opinions of others about what happened and how life works).

Table 4.1
Types of Participant Input

Interview questions	Participant response
What happened?	Narrative description of circumstances
What was your experience of what happened	Recollections of personal affect
What did you learn?	Reflections about "how life works."

At this juncture, it is important to note that the text includes both verbatim quotes (indented text blocks) taken directly from interview transcriptions, as well as narrative descriptive paragraphs in which I report and synthesize what was told to me during the interviews. I fully recognize that my own voice infuses the entire chapter, on the one hand in the selection of the verbatim quotes, and on the other hand, in the representation of what was said to me by the

research participants. As such, my voice is inescapably present both in the exposition as well as in the analysis of the data, even if I do not consistently write in the first person (e.g., "I believe that…"), or refer to my role as interviewer ("Mary told me…" or "I heard Joe say…"), or take credit for a judgment ("In my opinion, Bob was frustrated…"). Nonetheless, I am confident that I have followed the counsel of Rossman and Rallis (2003), to provide you with a lively narrative in which my biases, while unavoidably present, are controlled; and that in balance, the voices of the research participants are not drowned out by my own voice. All in all, I trust I have conveyed their experiences authentically, while at the same time revealing my own perspective in an engaging and compelling presentation.

Backgrounds of the Participants

NOTE: The names, affiliations and any identifying references of the participants have been changed to protect their anonymity.

In this section I offer a descriptive narrative of the lives of each of the five research participants before they considered the shift from the business world to the nonprofit service sector. Based on stories told to me (and as I have interpreted them), I describe the personal background, education, early career path, and work positions held by the respective participants prior to their shifts to the nonprofit sector; and where appropriate, I have included a narrative chronology of the positions they have held in the nonprofit world.

Table 4.2 summarizes the participants' backgrounds. Of the five individuals studied for this dissertation, two are women and three are men. Their corporate experience encompasses a variety of professions, including law, marketing, management consulting, finance, and sales in a broad range of companies and private professional practice firms. Their nonprofit experience covers five distinct fields: land conservation, animal protection and rights, family grieving and bereavement services, nonprofit leadership development, and community fund-raising. All are senior managers: four chief executives and one chief financial officer. In all but one case

("Donald"), the participants spent more years in the for-profit world than they have in the nonprofit sector.

Table 4.2
Participant Backgrounds

Name	For-profit field (years)	For-profit specialty	Nonprofit field (years to 2011)	Non-profit Position
Betsey	Management Consulting (12)	International Finance	Family grieving and bereavement (9)	President
Donald	Brand products and Banking (10)	Marketing	Training and development of nonprofit leaders (21)	Director
James	Newspaper/media (29)	Sales	Community Fundraising (3+)	Executive Director
Paul	Law (25+)	Environmental law	Land Conservation (4+)	Executive Director
Victoria	Corporate Management (27)	Finance and Administration	Animal Humane Society(2)	Director of HR and Finance

In the following narratives, I have included comments made during the interviews that reflect how the participants felt about what was happening to them. I believe that these personal reflections suggest the degree to which the objective circumstances that the participants faced hold a high degree of subjective experience that, in turn, offers us salient background data to illuminate the results and analysis that follow.

Betsey

Betsey's for-profit career was in the international business finance arena. Her transition to the nonprofit sector has led her to the nonprofit field of service to grieving families.

Betsey was born into a middle-class world. Her great-grandparents were immigrants from Ireland at the turn-of-the-century and had a strong Irish-American identity. Betsey's generation was the first where there was any family expectation that one of the children would attend college.

Betsey reported that as a child, she was very good in math and analytical thinking, which pleased her father (an engineer), as well as her mother, who wanted her to get a good job in a

"respectable" profession. While Betsey was also very creative and won many awards as an artist, the message from her parents was consistently oriented to "making a good living."

> *Betsey:* My parents would say, "You can't make money at this [being an artist], so stay away from that." Financial security was really important [to them]. Doing anything professionally that did not meet defined financial objectives was "too risky."

She attended a private university in the Northeast, majoring in quantitative economics, and continued on with her education to receive a Masters in International Economics and Finance from another private university. Following graduation, she took a junior position at one of the "big eight" international management consulting firms and worked her way quickly up the ranks, traveling extensively to work with a variety of corporate clients, and working out of corporate branch offices in Washington, DC, New York, Chicago, and the UK. Ultimately, and within five years after completing her graduate studies, Betsey was managing the economics practice for one of the firm's branch offices in a major metropolitan city in the northeast United States. She characterizes her rise in the firm this way:

> *Betsey:* I entered as a consultant; then I became a senior consultant; then I became a manager; then a senior manager. I started as a nobody; then a junior nobody; then I was somebody; then I was a senior somebody. That's how the joke went!

Soon thereafter, she joined a number of her colleagues who jumped ship to join another, even larger international management consulting firm (the new office was located just across town), where she continued to play a senior role as a consultant, but in the new firm, she no longer directed a practice group. Around this time, Betsey married; she and her new husband started their family. Throughout this period, Betsey found her work as an international management consultant an invigorating intellectual challenge, filled with learning experiences:

> *Betsey:* I loved all that stuff [working with companies large and small all over the world] because I was continuing to develop my analytical thinking skills… even though I was really only working on a particular type of analysis, which was multinational profitability, particularly as it related to intellectual property (technology, brand names, etc.).

At the same time, the higher up Betsey got in the firm, the greater was the challenge to her work life balance, especially with the advent of a growing family:

> *Betsey*: …When you get to be a senior manager, you get to pick your own projects, make your own projects… But they also make you work like a dog… and work life balance is very difficult. Although I think I did a pretty good job of work life balance, they would say, "Well, we'll pay you more. We'll pay you more. We'll pay you more." That's nice, but it's not everything. So there were fewer and fewer ways to motivate me because even though some of the projects were interesting, the bread-and-butter routine projects, over and over again (which is how we make money)… that's not so interesting. So it started to lose a little bit of its interest for me.

Betsey characterizes the traumatic death in 1999 of her second daughter in infancy as a "big catalytic event [that] totally rocked our world." Over the next two years, her entire family had to address the trauma, but with the birth of her next (healthy) child in 2000, she felt that she was "really coming through the other side" of her most intense grieving period. Then, following the terrorist attacks of September 2001, she began to question seriously her professional life in the business world.

> *Betsey:* [At that time] I'm starting to feel resilient and I'm feeling stronger… and realizing, "You know what? This job is not enough. It's intellectually challenging. I love the people I work with. But I have two children who are really precious to me. Do I really want to get up every day, put them in daycare, or give them to a nanny or something like that? Is what I'm doing really worth it?" That's when I started to think, "It's not enough. This is not interesting enough."

But Betsey didn't want to give up a lucrative professional position ("some of the old voices [came] into [my] head, like my mother and father [who said], 'You have to have a good job.'"). Rather, she adjusted her work schedule and reduced her hours to four days a week, with a 20% reduction in salary. But the work load remained the same, and time continued to pass as she struggled to consider whether to continue to stay for the good paycheck or to leave for a work life more suited to her.

> *Betsey:* How long do you have to talk to yourself about [making the choice to leave]…"Hello?? What's your number one priority? Is it money? No! So stop letting money make that decision!" You know, it's really amazing that even though you're pretty aware that you can actually do something, it takes forever [to make the decision]…

In 2002 she finally made the decision to leave:

> *Betsey:* I was driving home from work… It was a beautiful sunny day… [I said to myself] "How many sunny days are you going to have in your life?" And it was like, "You know, this is so not worth it." I went home that night and I said to my husband, "I have to quit my job." I'd said that many times before, but he knew I meant that [this time] I was really going to quit my job… The next day I went into my boss and … told him I would be leaving in three months, and that I would look for a job in the nonprofit sector.

Her departure proved to be a rather smooth, and even a pleasant experience. Her boss was not surprised when she submitted her resignation, because he knew she was unhappy at the firm. She was able to leave a few weeks later, and the generous severance package she received carried her through the next several months.

> *Betsey:* It was a pretty sweet financial deal. I was relieved that it wasn't the typical corporate America thing, which is once they know [you are leaving the firm], they escort you from the building immediately that day. I was really pleased. I had a proper farewell luncheon with my staff and everything like that. So it was really good. And then, I jumped into the abyss of going from corporate to nonprofit, not really knowing what that meant… not knowing what I was going to do.

While still working, Betsey had become involved with several local nonprofits as a volunteer, and had also volunteered for the alumni association of her college alma mater. But after leaving the consulting practice, the primary focus of her volunteer efforts was on a program that provided impoverished homeless children with everyday supplies donated by suburban middle-class and upper-middle-class families. The match seemed perfect for her:

> *Betsey:* It totally appealed to me. [This organization was] like a startup. It was the founder's idea and very much in the test stage. She had a corporate background and a political background. It was appealing to me from an analytical perspective because it was all economics; supply and demand. There was a tremendous excess of supply, and just a crushing demand for these families. It was market inefficiency that we couldn't get all the supplies to this huge demand. These families did not have these things, and it was messing up their lives completely. I mean… their kids could not go to school because they did not have shoes. It appealed to everything about me; my professionalism… a great plan… well thought out. It was practical. I loved it.

As her enthusiasm for and dedication to the mission of this organization grew, the voluntary nature of her work with the organization expanded first into a part-time professional

position, and then full-time, where she was paid not much more than her expenses (primarily for commuting and daycare for her children). Betsey immersed herself in the operations of the organization, and working alongside its founder, played a critical role in securing the use of a major warehouse facility that dramatically expanded the organization's service capacity. But with her personal immersion and the organization's growth, also came the stresses that often arise with a small organization, run by a founder, with a very small staff, and enormous demand for services. Betsey enjoyed the entrepreneurial challenges of growing the organization, but after three years there, she found herself enjoying it less and wanting to leave.

> *Betsey:* It started to sort of come apart because the founder was very strong-willed and would not give up control, and that wasn't necessarily my way of working. She had a very political background and liked to make a lot of decisions using a political mindset rather than a corporate mindset. I didn't know the secret [political] codebook. I'm not saying it's right or wrong. That's just not the way I am. There was the founder, myself, and the president [CEO], and the three of us, we all just started fighting too much about, you know: "You're doing this… Who said you could do that…" And all that stuff. It was sucking the life of me.

After leaving the organization in 2005, Betsey "dabbled" in several nonprofits. She was on the board of one organization and helping out as a volunteer with another. But she soon became uncomfortable with the dabbling role, and realized she really needed to anchor herself with a particular organization. She searched out job listings for nonprofit organizations, and saw one that appealed to her on several levels: they were looking for an executive director with administrative, managerial, and business backgrounds to help them with finances and organizational growth. It was a small organization located less than 4 miles from her home. And perhaps most importantly, it was an organization that had a great reputation in supporting children, teens and families who were grieving the death of someone close to them; and in providing community outreach and education on how to help grieving children and teens. Betsey met with a small group of board members who were very honest about the organization's fragile financial situation. For Betsey, helping an organization in financial jeopardy was a positive opportunity.

> *Betsey:* It was not intimidating or scary to me.… I wasn't scared off, because you know, at this point in my life, I don't have to support my entire family based on my salary, I have a lot of flexibility in my life, and this was really a big challenge because this organization had a wonderful reputation for doing really great work. And they were also very well known for the fact that they were always scraping money together, so to me, it was such a win-win situation. I remember my husband saying this would be a perfect job for me, and I felt that way too. I just went through the usual [hiring] process, interviewed people, and, then just jumped right in.

For the next three years, Betsey became a player in the social services field of providing services for children in family bereavement situations. The organization was very grassroots, with a very small staff and operating budget, and heavily dependent on volunteers. Betsey's first initiative (in her first year) focused on developing the organization's first-ever non-event-based fundraising program, which proved to be a great success. Her second initiative (in her second year) was to organize a board retreat and strategic planning process, which confirmed the ongoing need for developing the board and expanding the organization's base of individual and corporate donors.

But in her third year with the organization, problems started arising. The organization had grown beyond its own internal staff and physical (facilities) capacities. Betsey found herself wanting to take the organization to the next level, yet being personally held back by day-to-day chores (e.g., answering the phone, taking care of facilities, and updating the website) that she herself had to take on. It became clear to her that the organization needed an executive director more interested and suited to managing internal operations, than to building a larger external organizational vision. In May of 2009 Betsey and the board concurred that her position should be eliminated, and on July 31st of that year she left the organization.

Meanwhile, Betsey had already been talking to her work-network in the professional field of family bereavement. She learned that the national professional association was looking to hire its first executive director. She applied for and secured the position, which began as these interviews were being conducted. Today, Betsey looks forward to working with a membership of colleagues and constituents.

> *Betsey:* I'm not on the front lines, but I *am* working with people on a professional level to really move this whole [family bereavement] profession forward. It's great intellectual stuff. It has great operational challenges (which I love) because we have a presence -- members and board members -- all across the country. Trying to make sure that we have an organization that is responsive to all the different constituencies is just really, really exciting. And I do know that there's a lot of work that needs to be done.

Donald

Following several years in direct marketing within the banking industry, Donald became a marketing executive and director of management training and development programs for nonprofit organizations and educational institutions.

Donald grew up in a strong Roman Catholic family background in a large northeastern city. His father was an insurance agent and his mother a stay-at-home mom. As the oldest child, he viewed himself as "a sort of referee for the family," and also a caregiver for his mentally disabled brother. As such, his commitment to service started at an early age (in his teens, on two occasions he nearly decided to enter the priesthood). Donald is married with two children. He and his wife were both bankers (she worked at a competitive bank); they met while volunteering on behalf of a battered women's shelter.

Donald's first business experience took place while he was attending a large public university in the Northeast, where he was hired to be the campus representative for a chewing tobacco company. Following his graduation from college, he joined the tobacco company and moved to their operations on the West Coast, but left soon thereafter, when he learned of the throat cancer controversy around the product:

> *Donald:* … I just decided this is not what I want to do with my life. You know, I was excited. I had a job; but passion-wise, this was not it. It wasn't the right thing, and maybe that's why it alludes a little bit as to why I got into the nonprofit sector. I wanted my work to reflect a little bit more of me.

Over the next two years, Donald attended a public university in the Midwest, where he earned his MBA in marketing, after which he immediately secured a position as a marketing associate at a mega-bank in a larger urban center in the Northeast. He was at that bank for two or three years in the late 1980s just at the time when direct mail marketing was becoming a

mainstream business development strategy. While he enjoyed the marketing process, he found himself boxed in as a "direct mail specialist," and he wanted to play a larger organizational role. A position became available at the city's largest center for adult education for a director of marketing, which Donald applied for and secured. At the time, he was drawn to the job, not because it was with a nonprofit educational organization, but because it appeared to be a challenging position in a senior management role encompassing all aspects of institutional marketing.

In his work with the education center, Donald began to establish relationships with other fellow nonprofit marketing managers in the area, with whom he shared a thirst for further professional development, education, and training in connection with their work in the nonprofit sector.

> *Donald:* I had come from the banking world where I had had all this educational support, and all of the sophisticated ways of looking at marketing a product. [When I joined the adult education center] I felt like I had just come into the desert. It was like I had walked into nonprofit land, and all I could hear was the whispering of the desert wind. There was nothing here as far as a strong understanding of marketing and communications, and of analysis and return on investment. I was seeing the nonprofit sector as a sector, and lacking a lot of stuff.

Shortly thereafter, Donald founded a nonprofit marketing association, whose purpose was to improve marketing professionalism within the nonprofit sector. His interest in serving the professional development and educational needs of the broader nonprofit community grew as this organization evolved, and even though he was leading this effort as a volunteer, he began a new aspect of his working career that continues today.

> *Donald:* You had people coming into the [nonprofit] sector with passion but not with expertise. They wanted to save this or relieve that, but they didn't have the managerial or organizational experience. So there was a lot of money not being used as effectively as it could. But at the same time a lot of people were starting to come into the sector who had professional [business] experience and wanted to get more engaged in a career that meant something to them. Within a couple of years, I knew that this was what I wanted to do, and it's interesting that [20+ years later] I'm still in education [of the nonprofit sector] now.

Donald's next career move was an entrepreneurial venture that lasted about five years. In an internal staff political firestorm, he had been asked to leave the center for adult education. He had no job. Tapping into his entrepreneurial spirit, he decided to launch a quarterly periodical that would address the professional needs of, and establish a dialogue between and among the region's nonprofit executive community. Starting out of his home, he founded a publication, which, over the next two years, garnered a readership of 2000 (10% of the region's nonprofit market at the time). While he understood the nonprofit world and their needs, he found himself a fish out of water in the publishing industry, and not able to secure sufficient advertising revenue to sustain the publication. He almost went into personal bankruptcy to sustain the enterprise.

> *Donald:* I started to get into tough financial times. Do I pay the mortgage or do I do a marketing campaign [for the magazine]? I was getting real tight on keeping this going. I had a pretty good readership over two years, but suddenly I realized – – this is one thing I learned about entrepreneurism – – is that you've got to know the industry. I knew the nonprofit sector, but I didn't know publishing. [I used] models that I thought would work as far as advertising went, and I was getting some big ones [advertisers], but it wasn't enough.

It was then that Donald was contacted by another regional nonprofit research organization interested in merging his publication into their operations to create an organization whose purpose was to provide capacity-building programs and services for individual nonprofit groups and the nonprofit sector in general. The merger was completed and Donald stayed with his regional publication as its editor-in-chief for another three years to help expand the regional brand of larger parent organization. At that point, the parent organization wanted to shift and expand its market orientation to a larger national focus. Recognizing his personal commitment to serve the local region, Donald decided to leave. It was the year 2000, and he was hired as the marketing director at the Center for Continuing Studies at a large public university in the Northeast.

Within a few months, Donald prepared a concept paper to establish at the University an educational program for nonprofit organizations and their executives in that state. While

marketing continue to be the primary focus of his work at the Center, on the side he organized educational forums for nonprofit managers. The modest success of these initial efforts encouraged his idea for a more formal program. As time passed and the idea grew, he realized that in order to be successful in the academic world of the University, he would need a terminal degree, and so two years after he arrived at the University, he began a doctoral program of study at the University's School of Education, leading four years later to a PhD in educational leadership. His area of research focused on the professional development needs of the nonprofit sector.

Around that time, a change in the leadership at Center for Continuing Studies brought a new Dean who was interested in expanding the Center's role in educating workers in the state's nonprofit sector. Donald was asked to continue as marketing director of the Center in name only, while also establishing a Program to support nonprofit leaders. He was given an office and some seed money to get started.

> *Donald:* By the time I was in my Ph.D. program, I knew I was doing two things at once. I was spending time conducting research on the educational needs of the nonprofit sector, while designing [the program for nonprofit leaders]. So I was doing my PhD, which allowed me [not only] to start a program, but I was also doing the work that allowed me to understand what the needs were to develop that program. I was getting three or four birds with one stone [sic].

Today, the program that Donald directs is in the final year of its seed funding. As a non-tenure track adjunct faculty member Donald administers the program, teaches noncredit programs, and facilitates bringing other experts in as instructors. He is confident that the program will receive support to continue following the three-year seed period.

James

> *For nearly 30 years, James was in advertising executive in a number of media corporations (newspaper, ad agencies, and radio). He is currently the CEO of a regional nonprofit community fundraising agency in New England.*

James attended a large urban private university in the Northeast under a five-year co-op study program. He took classes in the first year and then work assignments each succeeding

alternate year thereafter. As a journalism major, James' co-op jobs were assignments with public relations departments. He wrote press releases, took photographs, and became involved in corporate programs in the public arena. At a major insurance company, he became involved with the company's sponsorship of a major international sporting event, which connected James directly with the hardscrabble world of newspaper coverage and advertising.

> *James:* That was a very formative piece of learning for me. My boss was a grizzled old newspaper guy (this is still back in the days where he would go out, drink his lunch, and be one mean SOB after he got back). And you know, you kind of dodge. You learn when to speak and when to hide.

The insurance company offered him an ongoing position after he graduated college, but James decided rather to travel around the country looking for positions in advertising and marketing. He found himself in the Rocky Mountain States, where he sold advertising for a local newspaper affiliated with a national publisher. This was his first sales job. He stayed there for two years, but was not satisfied, and wanted to move on.

> *James:* I didn't [want to] get into that big fish corporate world. If I had stayed within that organization, I would have been put on the [corporate] track of becoming a retail manager. Then you become an ad director, and if you do well there, you become a general manager somewhere. And if you do a good job there, then you become a publisher. But you move around the country based on what they need. And you know, I was not cut from that cloth. I had that kind of fierce independence; kind of like, "Nobody's going to tell me when to move," kind of thing.

Still in his 20s, and "full of vigor," James opted to leave the corporate five-day-a-week newspaper, and join a small, independent free-distribution weekly. Within a few months, his boss quit, and James was offered his first management position as advertising director.

> *James:* I went from being one of the Indians to the chief of this operation. That was trial by fire. Not only did I sell advertising and create advertising; now I had to manage people to do the same.

James stayed in this position for two years. During this time he got married, and he and his new wife decided to move to New England, where he was hired as the number two sales executive for a newspaper in a midsize city. After two years in this position, as his boss's

retirement date (originally anticipated to be in a year or two) kept being extended out, James decided to move outside of the newspaper business to an ad agency where he felt he would be more directly connected and committed to the world of advertising. However, two years later, the advertising director at his old job finally decided to retire, and the owner asked James to come back, which he did, and where he stayed for five more years. During this period, James's two children were born, and he and his family were beginning to feel the effects of a heavy executive workload.

> *James:* I thought about leaving the industry. I mean, you work pretty damned hard in the newspaper business. It's constant, which is very engaging, but it is also very draining over time. The business would have its ups and downs obviously. [During] the ups, you're always climbing; you can never sell enough. Then on the downside of it, you can't seem to plug enough leaks [fast enough]. When it would go south, it went south pretty quick.

Around this time, a job opened up at a local daily newspaper serving a regional population in a nearby state. Once again, James found himself intrigued by working for yet another family-owned newspaper business, which had its pros and cons:

> *James:* [When you work] for these family-owned newspapers, [you feel] as though you have a little bit more control of your own destiny, but the opportunity for growth is limited, because if you aren't part of the offspring, you aren't going too far up the chain.

James stayed at this newspaper for 13 years as advertising director. Along the way, his number two person left the business, but budgets were tight and his immediate subordinate was not replaced. James found himself wearing two hats for about 3 1/2 years:

> *James:* Really, at that point, [I was] just kind of burned out… tired. And I was looking to try something different. I loved the business, but didn't feel that I wanted to be doing it forever, but I didn't know what else to do.

Sometime during his work at the newspaper, James started volunteering for a variety of nonprofit organizations in the area. His executive position at the newspaper gave him public visibility, opening up senior volunteer opportunities, and making him an attractive potential board member and advisor for nonprofits. First he was involved with a local literacy project, then on the board of the Fine Arts Center at the nearby State University, and he volunteered for the area Red

Cross chapter. At first, he felt that his professional role in advertising sales might present a conflict of interest for his ability to raise funds as a volunteer board member, so he shied away from making solicitations on behalf of any organization. But when he accepted an appointment to the local public library's fund-raising committee, he made calls asking people for money, which he found not much different than trying to sell an advertisement. He then was appointed to serve on the Business Development Committee of the local hospital which was making significant requests of donors, which he enjoyed.

> *James:* I found [helping nonprofits] to be engaging, and I was starting to say, "Okay, if I was ever to leave the newspaper business, what is it I would do?" I thought I had very solid managerial skills, obviously in budgeting and goal-oriented deadlines (I mean, if you didn't have a deadline, it didn't feel like you are living). I was successful [at fund raising] and I think well received in most cases.

James considered his career options measured against his family's situation. He could look for a position in a larger newspaper which would probably require relocation out-of-state. But with his children still in high school, a move would cause too much of an upheaval. Commuting five days a week was not a viable option, regardless of the financial benefit for securing a better paying position.

> *James:* I mean, there are opportunities to make more money, but what is the price you're going to pay to do that?

As James continued to volunteer in the nonprofit world, he also continued to question his life in the newspaper business:

> *James:* It just felt like that for all the energy and effort, "Geesh, couldn't you do some more good than just, you know, come up with a great newspaper section?" That was the thing… You'd come up with a great bridal section. Okay, you can break every sales record you ever had, but as soon as that damn thing hit, you knew that next year, you are going to be faced with that same bridal section [but now] associated with this huge goal [based on the prior year's success]. So in a way, the business punished you for success. It wasn't like you [only have to] raise the revenue that you are able to generate. It's not like finding someone who will say, "James, it's enough. You've done a good job." It was more like, "Wow, that was good. What are you going to do next year?" You knew that the clock began ticking as soon as that thing hit print, and that's the part that was like,

> "Oh, Man…" I mean, you could never let go of that kind of future consequence for today's good effort.

With his children approaching college age, James was not yet ready to make the shift to the nonprofit world. A colleague in the radio business suggested that he apply for a position that had opened in radio advertising. The pay was good, and James felt he might learn something new in an allied field, so he took a job that was offered. The newspaper he had been with for 13 years did not want him to leave. They offered him a better position, but he had already made his decision to leave, so he joined the new radio station, where he stayed for over three years.

After about 2 1/2 years into the job at the radio station, the president of the local chapter of a national community fund-raising organization left the organization. It was big news in the community, and corporate executives in the area, including James, were well aware that the organization was going to be looking for new chief executive. The idea of applying for the position appealed to James.

> *James:* I said to myself, "You know what? I can do this job." I was a community guy. I'd done work with the chambers of commerce. [I had] my nonprofit experience through the hospital. The skill sets I had developed in the world of newspapers were going to be easily transferable. It's a relationship business [just like] when you're selling stuff.

When James approached a board member of the organization to ask if he (James) would be a viable candidate for the job, he learned that the board had decided to wait a year and go through an interim period before hiring a new executive. So James returned to his work at the radio station, and stopped thinking about the position as a career opportunity to consider.

About a year later, James received a phone call from the same person on the board of the community fund-raising organization with whom he had originally spoken about the job. He was told the deadline for the application was "tomorrow at noon", and why had he not applied? James was surprised, because he had not heard that the search had been resumed; he hadn't been thinking about the position for a year or so; and his excitement had diminished from a year

earlier. He went home that night, created a resume ("I whipped something together."), and applied for the job the next day.

The hiring consultant James met during the early interviews pointed out that James was "not a nonprofit guy applying for a major nonprofit job," but James articulated what he thought was a strong platform for his candidacy:

> *James:* I'm reading the job description, and I didn't think that just because it's nonprofit, it's *that* different. My presentation at the time was: "What this organization needs is someone who is community-based; who knows the people in the marketplace." And I figured I had that one nailed. And I said more than once: "If you bring in someone from the outside that doesn't know the players, in six months, they'll still be trying to figure out what grocery store they like better. And in [the same] six months, I can learn a whole lot about the world of nonprofits. Meanwhile I already have all the connections I will need for this job, and so if you apply that same timeline of how long it is going to take [an outsider] to assimilate into the community, and know who the players are, and know the people in the room they should be talking to, and know all the back-stories like I do, no matter how much time it takes: six months, nine months, a year, two years… in that same amount of time -- I think I'm a pretty smart guy -- I can learn the wiles of the world in the nonprofit way. So send me to the United Way boot camp and I think I can pick up a lot of that stuff quicker than an outsider will be able to pick up the fact that so and so, who president of such and such corporation is a four handicap golfer, but he cheats [James laughs saying this] kind of thing." So that was my pitch.

James presented a compelling enough argument to be hired for the job. During the 3 years that he has been the position (as of this writing), James has settled into a community leadership role. The organization's annual fundraising campaigns have grown each year, and he has established solid relationships with many of the community players both on the donor side and on the agency (grant recipient) side of the community fundraising equation. He says he has learned a lot, and the learning curve has in fact kept the job engaging.

> *James:* I will say that my first couple of years, just the exposure and experience of this new world of nonprofits, and the value that it brings to the community has been great.

Paul

Paul is the executive director of a nonprofit land conservancy in a rural county in the Northeast USA. For many years prior, he was a private attorney practicing in a variety of law firms in a major metropolitan city.

Paul was born in the late 1940s in the upper Midwest. During my interviews with him, he reflected extensively on the strong connection between his heritage and upbringing, and his early perspective on money and business that would prove to have an impact later in life on his career thinking and direction.

> *Paul:* My father was a minister, and his father was a minister; I was brought up in the church. My father was a well-educated person. He was not a fundamentalist, but he had a lot of biases… He certainly had suspicions of business and money. I was really brought up to believe that stuff… It was a very anti-money, uncomfortable-with-money, suspicious-of-money kind of background, or about business, too. My parents had a very strong belief in [the concept of] *vocation*, as in, "You are called by God" to do something. It wasn't that you had to be a religious person, but God gave you certain talents and skills, and your mission on this earth is to use them for the glory of God, which is what would be your calling. It wasn't like [I had to become] an evangelist or preacher or something, but [they believed that] the question was, "How are you going to put whatever talents you have to the use of mankind?" That was very deeply ingrained in me. I just accepted [what my family was saying] without a lot of thought. I thought a lot about the ethical issues, but I never really wrestled with my assumptions that business was not a very noble calling… I would now see that somewhat differently, but I didn't at the time.

As a result of this upbringing, Paul says, "I always thought I would have something to do, probably with public policy, government, or the nonprofit world." While attending a selective liberal arts college in the Midwest as an undergraduate, he decided that the law might be an interesting career direction -- especially the kind of lawyering that would help improve the social condition, so he attended law school at a private university in a northeastern urban center. Immediately following law school, he secured a clerkship with a federal district judge who mentored Paul in "the practice of law from a very intellectual and lofty perspective" and the prospect of practicing law became somewhat more intriguing to him. Following his clerkship, Paul was hired to work in the public legal office in a major city, where he worked on civil litigation cases for the government, which he found to be a comfortable environment, and which he enjoyed.

> *Paul:* I had a ball there. And at that point, I thought, "Well, Gee, I actually kind of like being a lawyer. Isn't that funny?"

Paul had not considered joining one of the big law firms, nor even being in private practice ("I think I had a lot of hang-ups about the adversarial system and representing 'avaricious' clients, and [having to deal with] the commercial side of a law practice"), but he was intrigued by an opportunity that arose and which he took, to join a small law firm that had been established by two of his colleagues at the public legal office.

> *Paul:* I had at several points along the way interviewed at big law firms, as law students do. When I would go there, I felt uneasy and uncomfortable. I felt like it wasn't me. [But] my two friends had started a law firm. It was just two of them and they were doing nifty stuff: civil rights cases and employment cases. They had their own kind of business; it was like having a business with friends. It was informal, congenial.

Paul was only the third lawyer to join the firm, but the practice grew over time to 22 lawyers at its high point over the course of the 17 years that Paul was there. This was in the early 1980s, and Paul found himself drawn to the emerging field of environmental law which he focused on and developed into a viable practice, representing private corporate clients, municipalities and community groups in environmental and land-use matters: approvals of development proposals, land-use permitting, environmental impact review, superfund litigation, etc. Soon, he also assumed managerial duties for the firm, becoming somewhat of administrative partner. Paul enjoyed the scale and style of the firm:

> *Paul:* We maintained a very familial atmosphere. We had a really nice staff. People generally liked getting out of bed and coming to work in the morning. And it was very important to me to be a part of that, and to have something to do with it.

In the mid-1990s Paul was one of ten lawyers from the firm who decided to join a larger, medium-sized law firm in the same large city. It was there that Paul's role shifted within the firm for which he now worked:

> *Paul:* I became just another partner in the environmental and litigation group. I was not involved in management anymore. I never had any particular aspiration [to manage the practice], so I was actually kind of relieved to not have to worry about [running the firm]. I just practiced law.

His practice of environmental law continued and grew. He even had the opportunity to argue a case before the US Supreme Court ("a cool experience"). But after six years, the firm

was "eaten up by this really big firm." While Paul remained a partner in the new firm, "I became very emphatically an employee." Concurrently, with the easing of enforcement of environmental laws by federal and state agencies, Paul's practice of environmental law began to decline, and as his practice declined, it became more difficult for him to meet the pressures from the firm for him to produce billable hours. But without the hours to bill, Paul turned to matters internal to the firm that he found enjoyable; namely, mentoring young lawyers in the firm who had been assigned routine run-of-the-mill personal injury cases. After a year or so, the pleasantness of this assignment wore off.

> *Paul:* I became unhappy for the first time in my life… Here I was in the business world, and [I had been] enjoying it for the most part, [but now] really finding myself not happy. And I hated that. It was important for me to always look forward to getting out of bed in the morning and really like what I'm doing; feeling good about it. I felt good about being a lawyer when I was in private practice, which surprised me because I never dreamed of being in private practice, even as late as when I went to law school. [But the fact was], there were many things about it that I enjoyed. I thought I was good at it; I thought I was doing worthwhile things; and I thought I was employing my talents responsibly from my point of view. So I was unhappy at this really big firm as my practice was declining. I didn't like the really big firm environment, [and I also] felt badly about the fact that my own personal productivity had declined.

Paul commented on how he felt about the fact that he did not get good feedback from people in the firm.

> *Paul:* It made me angry. It comes out of the walls. At some point, very specifically I didn't get good feedback... I resented that, even though it was a rational business judgment from the point of view of what *they* were doing. So I pretty much made up my mind, I couldn't stay there.

Meanwhile, on the personal front, Paul had always wanted to have a second home or camp property outside of the city.

> *Paul:* I really craved someplace in the outdoors. I was brought up in a pretty outdoors world. My parents both came from a farm environment. I spent a lot of summers out in the [back-country woods of my home state]. I loved nature, the outdoors, and working splitting wood. By the time it dawned on me that I really liked living in [a large northeastern city], I [also] realized that I was interested to have a place to get out of the city, too.

Earlier in his career, when Paul was with his first law firm, he and his first wife had rented a house in a rural county about three hours north of the city. They then bought a second home for weekends there. After the breakup of his first marriage, Paul kept the weekend house, and met his second (and current) wife, who was living in in the same county at that time. Throughout the entire period of Paul's evolving law career, they maintained the weekend country home in the rural county, while their primary home was located in the suburbs just outside of the major metropolitan city where he practiced law.

So it was in 2005, about the time that Paul (now in his mid-50s) became unhappy at the large law firm, he thought about the possibility of moving into his house in the rural county where he envisioned setting up a small private conservation law practice. He and his wife had friends there; they played together in a bluegrass band that gigged throughout the county; and since the late 1980s, Paul had become involved in local civic affairs as an active member of the board of the local land conservancy. Furthermore, Paul and his wife lived modestly, and had a sufficient nest egg, such that, "If I didn't earn another penny in my life, we would survive. We wouldn't be living too high off the hog, but we'd be okay." Overall, they felt they could set up a complete life relatively easily in such a country environment.

At the start of 2006, just at the time that Paul was making the decision to leave the large urban law firm and move to the country, the executive director of the local land conservancy resigned. As a board member of the organization, Paul was appointed to the search committee, which spent a year or so interviewing candidates for the position. One day, during a two-day process of interviewing finalists for the job, the professional search consultant the Conservancy had hired (and with whom Paul, as a member of the search committee had been working for several months interviewing candidates) called Paul aside and asked him if he had ever thought about applying for the position. Paul was impressed to be asked:

> *Paul:* He was just a professional headhunter guy who had gotten to know us over the course of six months. When he [asked me if I would consider applying], it was really a

> very liberating thing. It was a question coming from an objective person who didn't know anybody some six months earlier. It kind of made it okay to think about it. And if *he* was going to make the suggestion, and not *me*, then obviously that was [much more acceptable].

Paul considered the suggestion and came to the conclusion that he would apply for the position.

> *Paul:* I thought I probably compared pretty favorably to the candidate pool, and having thought so hard and for so long about what we needed in an executive director, where the organization was, and what we needed to do in the next five years… I mean, I was all juiced up. So I was thinking, "You know, like, I could do this."

It was November 2006, and once Paul applied for the position, the process moved forward quite quickly. After serving 26 years as a board member of the organization, Paul was hired as its executive director one month later, and he started the job on February 1, 2007. As of this writing, Paul has been in the same position for over three years.

Victoria

> *Victoria spent many years of her career as a financial and management executive across a variety of industries. She is now Director of Finance and Human Resources at a regional nonprofit animal Humane Society in Western New England.*

Victoria was born and raised in southern California. Her family lived in "a middle-class southern California neighborhood: modest track homes, dads go to work, and moms stay at home." She graduated in the mid-1970s from a public university in California with a BA in American history and cultural anthropology, and a minor in dramatic literature ("a very liberal arts background"). Her early work experience was characterized by a series of positions that seemed to have no specific career direction.

> *Victoria:* I guess my early experience was such that I let myself be easily buffeted by the wind of whatever [came along... It was just by] chance and circumstance, rather than having a really clear path based on what I wanted to do. [My siblings and I] kind of just muddled through in our respective paths and careers.

At the time, the economy was in a downturn, and her choices for employment appeared limited. She decided to move east to a major urban city:

> *Victoria:* [It was] personal fortitude and curiosity… In moving East, I was proving that California was truly the best place to live. I moved East so that I would be able to say, "I lived in [in the eastern city] for a year, so I know." I had $90 in my pocket. I got an Ameripass bus ticket, got on the bus, and left. I just took off.

Victoria found work in the hospitality industry, first as a tour guide and then with a major hotel corporation where she stayed for about three years, becoming a supervisor and then a manager in the company's worldwide group reservations system ("quite an experience for a 23-year-old"). While in that position, Victoria recognized that she needed to have an advanced degree, and so she left work to attend a large private urban university, where she earned a Master's degree in education in 1981 ("Physical education of all things, because I actually wanted to be an athletic trainer."). But Victoria did not pursue a position in her field of study. Rather, she stayed in the area and joined a firm in the software industry, installing securities accounting systems for an international bank ("I had no background in that, although in the mid-1980s, who did? It was a fun ride.").

In 1987, Victoria moved to northern New England. At this point in her career, even though she did not have sophisticated training in finance, she marketed herself for a brief time as a financial consultant ("I was very careful not to bill myself as a 'trained accountant'."), telecommuting with companies in the Boston area. A year later, she secured the position as Director of Accounting Services at a small progressive liberal arts college located near her home, and she worked there for two years:

> *Victoria:* It was a fun [place to work]. I loved the environment. I loved being in higher ed. I loved the fact that it was a learning environment. And also there was an opportunity to fill needs, to bring expertise, experience and ideas into an area that was somewhat of a vacuum.

The college had no human resources department, and although Victoria had never undertaken that function, nor was she asked to do so by the college administration, she nonetheless started helping employees understand their opportunities for retirement plans. The

college was not interested in developing those services further, so after two years at the college, Victoria looked for another position.

At about that time, Victoria learned that a small city nearby had become a regional center for food distribution of natural foods products. She applied to a large natural foods cooperative and assumed a position both as Accounts Payable Supervisor, as well as a staff member in the payroll department. Over the next twelve years, her executive role in the company expanded significantly. After three years, she became Manager of Finance and Administration; in two more years, Director of Finance and Administration; and in her ninth year with the company, she became its Chief Financial Officer. During the time that she was at the cooperative, the company grew from 60 to 400 people, and its gross sales grew from $16 million to $120 million. In her last year with the company (2002), Victoria received an executive MBA from a major public university in the South. When the cooperative merged with another company, Victoria knew that there was no room for two CFOs, and she left in 2002.

For the next year or so, Victoria returned to consulting for smaller companies helping with financial systems and strategic direction. One of those companies, a manufacturer of high-quality organic and natural food products, hired her in 2004 as its Director of Finance and Administration, but over the five years that Victoria spent in this company (until 2009), she became disenchanted with the corporate world, and began to envision a shift to the nonprofit sector. Her specific reasons were rooted in the question of *corporate mission*, which he felt was seriously missing in the company for which she was now a senior executive. Earlier in her career Victoria had experienced similar frustrations, working in settings where "the real mission of the organization may have been a little loose," but this time, the impact was more profound:

> *Victoria:* What particularly pushed my thinking about [the importance of] mission was that this manufacturing company was mission-less. I would talk about it with the owner, [and he would say] "Well, just do something about it."

> [I replied,] "I can, but you are the owner. You have to have ownership of [the company's mission]. If you can't truly believe it, and get people on board with that, it is not going to fly. It's just going to be words."
>
> At this point I'm in senior management. So I know that if I can't stay committed to mission and have the organization stay committed to mission, then it is *my* problem. I was a senior manager, and it was my responsibility. I took it as my responsibility, and the fact that I was not able to create a mission and get everyone on board with it and [have them] stick to it, meant that it was untenable for me [to stay there].

For the first time in her career, Victoria experienced a clear personal desire to assert her own self-direction, and it was clear to her that she should seek employment in the nonprofit world. There was no great urgency for Victoria to find a position in the nonprofit world. A full year before she actually made the move, she let her employer know that she was ready to make a career transition. During that year, she explored a number of job possibilities in neighboring communities, but the actual moment she heard about the position that she ultimately took, was unexpected, yet synchronistic.

> *Victoria:* It's a rather funny story. It was Sunday morning and [while I usually] get up very early every day, on this particular Sunday I said, "Lie in bed. Have a cup of coffee. Do a little [web] surfing [on the laptop]." And I said, "Hmm… I will look at cats. Where can I look at cats? Oh yeah, there's that [Humane Society] place." I don't know if I've ever been on the website before, although I had adopted a cat from them several years prior. So I get on the website, and I'm looking at cats, and the phone rings. I answer it, and a friend of mine says, "Victoria, [the same Humane Society whose web site I happened to be looking at just then] is looking for a Director of Finance and Human Resources. You need to apply." I said, "This is weird." How bizarre is that? So I said, "I'm supposed to apply."

When Victoria finally applied for the job, she proved to be the right candidate, and since 2009, she has been working at that Humane Society as its Director of Finance and Human Resources.

Considering the shift

Unlike the prior section of this chapter, in which I addressed the background of each research participant individually, in the following sections I report on certain topical aspects of

the career shift that one or more of the participants reported to me in connection with the following situational sequence in their transition from the business world to the nonprofit sector:

> ***Work life before the shift*** describes how work in the for-profit world seemed to the participants prior to any consideration of a career shift;
>
> ***Problems begin to arise*** reviews circumstances and issues that challenged the career satisfaction the participants were experiencing in their work, and led them to question their continuing relationship with for-profit work;
>
> ***Discovering an inner motivation to "a mission of service" and "place"*** describes how the participants began to shift their inner priorities, from a focus on "making money for the business" to "making the world a better place;"
>
> ***The downside caveat: Will I be able to make enough money?*** addresses a very common consideration that is likely to face any business person considering a shift to the nonprofit world.
>
> ***The job hunt*** provides anecdotes about what it was like for someone in the corporate world to look for work in the non-profit sector.

It should be noted that not every participant shared with me stories or opinions about each and every one of these topics. Nor is my interpretation necessarily comprehensive in describing their full experience. In the context of the phenomenological methodology used for this research, I believe that any expression of experience from any one or more participants regarding a given issue or theme is valid, even if it gives us only a cursory glimpse of how they felt.

Work life before the shift

Except for Donald, whose tenure in the banking industry was relatively brief (2-3 years), the participants in this study each spent a good many years (ranging from 12-29) working happily (to one degree or another) in the for-profit work environment. Betsey found her work as a senior manager in an international consulting firm to be a "great, full, rich experience."

> *Betsey*: I always wanted the challenging situation… I liked working with the projects where they said, "This is a difficult problem to solve; very complicated." I wanted to do that; to take on the intellectual challenge; that was interesting to me. And I liked working with the team. I liked developing staff.

To his own surprise, Paul's experience as private-practice attorney was just as positive.

> *Paul*: I never wanted to have "a job". You know, I wanted to do something that seemed worthwhile, I guess. So I was surprised to find myself actually enjoy the law firm, and enjoy the business part of it -- enjoy the whole thing about, you know, *shmeickling up* [sic – Yiddish colloquial for "fast-talking"] clients, trying to find some business. That was fun; much more fun than I thought it would be. And gratifying; gratifying to make a little money… I never dreamed I would ever have any money; [laughs] and I wouldn't say I ended up with all that much, but I certainly had more than my parents ever had. And I have made a comfortable living, and I've saved money. I paid for college for my stepdaughters and that kind of stuff. And that turned out to mean a lot to me.

Even though James regularly characterized his many years in media advertising as a grind ("kind of churning your life away…you go home at the end of the day…mentally and physically exhausted"), he also indicated that he really enjoyed the business. He said that he had "the advertising bug" early on in his career, and that he "loved advertising". He characterized his last job as "a great experience" that he "liked it a lot".

Victoria had quite a different experience. She characterized her many years working in the business world as *not* a career at all, but a sequence of opportunities and roads not taken.

> *Victoria*: I was *not* in any career. There was no career path. Truly, the career path was opportunity; finding or trying to figure out what I wanted to do; trying to figure out what I was good at, and acknowledging what I was good at. Part of it was just knowing what I *didn't* want to do,[as in,] "No, I don't really want to do *that*, and I won't do *that* again."

Even though Victoria considered herself to be a professional businesswoman who was making a mark in the business world by bringing fiscal discipline to companies, she nonetheless characterized the common thread of her career path in business as "independence and surviving." That is, the positions she took provided stable income to cover her living expenses. She felt that a happy and fulfilling professional life should mean "taking risks" with a job position, but the positions she actually ended up accepting in her business life were not risky; but rather, places where "I'd be able to learn, and be interested, and amused."

Problems begin to arise

In reading the narrative backgrounds of the research participants, I noted that up until some point, their for-profit careers were to some degree enjoyable, motivating, and fulfilling. But I also noted that for all of the participants, something shifted in their experience of life in the for-profit world that led them to consider making a shift of some kind. For all but Donald, the decision to leave came after many years in the business world. Donald's dissatisfaction with his work in the banking industry did not take place over the long term. He left his position in the banking industry after only two years, to seek out a position that would offer something more substantial than being simply a direct consumer marketing associate in a bank. It just so happened that he found a position in the nonprofit sector.

In the following three sections, I describe problematic circumstances that the participants mentioned to me that they faced prior to considering shifting their careers to the nonprofit sector. In the first section, James, Betsey, Paul, and Victoria describe how, at some point, their *climb up the corporate ladder* became uncomfortable for them. In the second section, Victoria explains her frustration when found *a culture of not caring* in any of companies she worked for. The third section examines how the participants were discomforted when they experienced being *dominated by the enterprise*.

Climbing the Corporate Ladder

One of the prevalent motivators in the for-profit world described by the participants is the idea of "going up the ladder" and making more money (Betsey called it "the food chain of leadership"). Early on in their for-profit careers, *titles* and *positions* (which translate to higher salaries, more authority and greater control of internal resources) were sources of personal energy to work hard and find satisfaction in the workplace. James described one instance of his getting an offer of a promotion in the newspaper business this way:

> *James*: …My wife at the time was pregnant…with our first child. So there was a lot of compelling reasons [to take the higher position], even though I had this kind of love/hate

> [relationship] with the world of newspapers. To some degree, there was certain stability there. I was good at it, and it was going to pay me more money than I was currently making, and I had a kid on the way, and man, I was in!"

Betsey described her experience of what it was like when there were no more rungs in the ladder to climb:

> *Betsey*: When I think back to when I was in the for-profit world, when you get into a leadership role as I was, there are fewer spots at the leadership level. I remember thinking that I really like the analytics, and I like the high tech industries, and the things that I was doing, but I really was not so interested in taking on more of that overall responsibility. I was really struggling with what is the next step. What could I do that could be a step up? Because there's always that feeling like you have to move up; you should not be happy with staying where you are. It's not okay to just sit at senior management [level]. You have to take another step.

For Paul, whose career was in the field of lawyering, "going up the ladder," meant joining ever larger law firms where he would have access to more professionally challenging work, and greater likelihood of financial stability. Unfortunately, Paul found that going up the ladder in this way was not necessarily a source of satisfaction. In hindsight, he noted how much he enjoyed the small firm that he first joined when he went into private practice: its friendly atmosphere, the firm's collegial work style, the senior management role that he played there, and the control he was able to wield, in charging reasonable billing rates. However, when that small firm merged with a somewhat larger firm, Paul experienced himself shifting toward a less engaged role in the firm ("I became just another partner"). And when that middle-sized firm merged was "eaten up" (Paul's words) by a really large firm, Paul found his so-called climb up the lawyer ladder to be disconcerting:

> *Paul*: At that point [when he joined the large firm], I became, very emphatically, an employee. I mean, I was called a partner; I <u>was</u> a partner. But I found that a somewhat alienating experience… I became unhappy for the first time in my life.

Soon thereafter, Paul began to consider a shift away from the big city lawyer life to acquire more comfortable existence in the country.

While Victoria did not explicitly characterize "getting ahead" as a problem, she hinted at the difficulty women in particular face in climbing the corporate ladder, and how her own career path could be framed in a gender context:

> *Victoria*: One of the few ways available to women to move through an organization was to take her show on the road, and try to up-sell to another organization, because the glass ceilings were very low. So the only way to get up, move up, make more money -- whatever the motivations were (and in my case it was all of the above) -- then you needed to change companies. It was also a time when companies would maybe throw a title at a woman, but you'd better believe the pay was not commensurate with that… So you went to another company that needed a particular skill set, and chances are you could leapfrog what you were making at the prior company.

A culture of not caring

A primary motivation for Victoria in the business world was working in an organizational culture where people cared about the well-being of others, both in the workplace and in the broader outside world. She said that as long as she could keep a degree of intellectual curiosity and passion for doing something, she was happy in her job.

> *Victoria*: Remember the [RCA] Victrola dog that would cock its head? I kind of love going through life with that cocked head, going, "Look at that. What do you think? What about that?" Having jobs that encouraged me or caused me to do that on a regular basis was good; and when I stopped doing that cocked head, I knew that it was time generally to move on.

Victoria would start enthusiastically in a position, expecting to have a positive impact on the culture there, but at some point she almost always found herself not caring for the culture, no longer learning, and no longer being challenged. For her, those were "trigger points" to start looking for another position. When asked what she meant by "not caring for the culture," she responded:

> *Victoria:* Sometimes it was sexism, apathy… you know, that "not caring" -- a passionless work environment; people not really caring about what they were doing; managers not caring about developing their staff. When I would see that, and if I couldn't make a change in those areas, then I'd want to take my show on the road, and do it somewhere else.… The overarching thing in each of these areas was *offending sensibilities*. It was just starting to challenge a sense of ethics [in me]; not in an illegal fashion, but just an ethical way of moving through life.

Dominance of the enterprise

The participants found that in one way or another, the business environment imposed a discomforting level of dominance over their personal lives -- both in and out of the workplace – that at some point became intolerable. For Paul, the discomfort resulted from an expectation that he would live a lifestyle that suited the enterprise. He described the "serious advice… to drum up business" ("in the law firm they would call it *marketing*") that he was given to join the country club and play golf with client prospects during the weekend. While Paul recognized the importance of, and even the good feelings derived from successful marketing initiatives that brought in new clients, playing golf at the club was not a strategy well-suited to his particular lifestyle.

> *Paul*: The notion of going out of your way to spend your life in a manner that you don't really want to spend it, so that you can meet people you don't really want to meet, so you can impress them with the fact that you are a reliable and sober man of the world that they should trust their important matters with, just was abhorrent to me.

The discomfort James felt in the newspaper advertising business stemmed from a lack of personal acknowledgment:

> *James*: That was the thing… You'd come out with a great bridal section. Okay, you can break every sales record you ever had, but as soon as that damn thing hit, you knew that the next year, you were going to be faced with that same bridal section with this huge goal associated with it. So, in a way, the business kind of punished you for success. It wasn't like [the nonprofit world] as [if] you raised the revenue that you were able to generate. It's not like finding someone who'll say, "James, it's enough. You've done a good job." It was always like, "Wow, that was good. What are you going to do next year?" You knew that the clock began ticking as soon as that thing hit print. And that's the part that was like, "Oh, man!" I mean, because you could never let go of that kind of future consequences for today's good effort.

Victoria's primary discomfort in the business world arose when she experienced that the bottom line of the enterprise became more important than the organization's mission; and without a mission, life in the organization lost its meaning for her (and as she saw it, also for the people who worked there).

> *Victoria*: Many for-profit companies can have a mission, can declare it; [and] people know what it is, but they'll still dance around it. They'll still make exceptions in order to meet the bottom line, or in order to meet [the] direction a president or director wants to go in, so that they'll deviate, and deviate from the mission to further someone's personal goals. I've seen it happen a lot, and that creates confusion in the organization. People don't know what they're supposed to be doing, and you wind up losing productivity because people start wandering about.

Both Paul (lawyer) and Betsey (management consultant) were discomforted by the exorbitant hourly rates they billed as they became more senior in their respective firms.

> *Betsey*: My billing rate was something insane… I think it was something like $400 [per hour]. I don't even remember what I was making. I remember doing the math. It was a nice multiple [over the hourly rate I was being paid].

They both found that the firm's demand on its employees for "billable hours" (a euphemism for revenue generated by services rendered) at times superseded the quality of service that needed to be provided:

> *Paul*: One of the things that I really hated about law as I started to really dislike it was the hourly rate; the business piece. I actually feel very strongly that there's something kind of corrupt about the practice of law [in a] commercial context. I think there's a fundamental conflict between the notion of being a professional and being a businessman. I think those are two very different views. If you are professional who has the skill to bring to bear [on] someone's problems [you can't just leave them because they can't afford to pay you]. … The pressure for billing hours leads to a lot of corrupt stuff, and I think it's kind of a scandal.

James described how difficult it was for him to deal with the ongoing trade-off in the newspaper business between fulfilling the larger corporate mission of quality customer service, as measured against the negative consequences for failing to reach financial goals and targets, and not contributing sufficiently to the company's bottom line.

> *James*: I felt very good about the [advertising] products that we sold and created… I loved to sit with the client and create a really solid message that would work for them. The execution of [that message] was… creative… and a lot of fun. But the metrics by which we were measured -- myself and the people that worked with me -- [were] really all about the bottom-line number. We could have created the best ads in the world, but if, at the end of the month, we're $50K short of what our revenue goal was, then <u>that</u> was the metric that you are ultimately judged by. As much as I embraced… the value and the good stuff that we were doing for our clients, when it came down to it, there was an

> entirely different standard being applied to where we were being successful. And that really came down to selling those inches, selling those inserts, selling everything to do with revenue. And that's… over time.. the frustrating part about the business…

Paul reflected a feeling similarly expressed by other participants, regarding a growing personal concern and distaste with the bottom-line mentality in for-profit world, and its impact on personal lifestyle:

> *Paul:* All the primary vectors had to do with "Get more money!" "Get more money!" "Get more money!" I just didn't like that at all, and pretty steadfastly -- although not entirely -- I managed to succeed to try not to do stuff, or be a different way, or live my life in a way that I didn't want to, [in order] to put myself in the ways of business.

Discovering an inner motivation to "a mission of service" and "place"

For the participants in this study, the growing personal dissatisfaction with the corporate setting stemmed to some degree from the role and impact the "company" (or "business") had in their personal and work life. This dissatisfaction is expressed in a consistent theme: *satisfaction in the for-profit world means subordinating some aspect of one's "self" to the needs of the enterprise*. In essence, the participants found themselves bothered by the circumstances of their business life in which they experienced that survival of the enterprise was more important than their own personal sense of self-purpose. Such concerns, when they first arose, could not quite be articulated or defined. But as we shall see in this section, as time wore on, and their concerns grew, the participants began to realize that their motivation to be satisfied in work and career needed to focus less on the enterprise and more on a personal mission to serve some larger purpose in the world, namely, a mission of service and a commitment to the quality of life for people in a place or a community.

Mission of Service

> *For all the energy and effort, "Geesh," couldn't you do some more good other than just, you know, come out with a great [advertising] section?* (James)

James's realization that service was more important to him than the enterprise came as a function of the overload he was experiencing from an exclusive focus he had to maintain on

meeting financial targets to sustain the newspaper company he was working for. This in turn, led him to be open to other possibilities that might offer him something to do in the world that would be more personally meaningful:

> *James*: After 13 years [at the newspaper], I was getting kind of tired. I was looking to try something different. You know, I felt I loved the business, but I didn't feel that I wanted to be doing it forever, but I didn't know what else to do. That's when… [I had my] first exposure to nonprofit [organizations]. I started volunteering… And I would sit on boards, and you know, you started to see another piece of the world. So instead of always just focusing on making the number… Making a number… Selling more ads… Selling it… You know, all of a sudden, I was like, "Wow, I want to <u>do</u> some things."

Betsey's transformation to service came suddenly and from a surprising turn of events. She had attended a senior management training program about understanding one's personal style. The self-assessment and profiling instruments that were administered in the program indicated many aspects of Betsey's personality with which she was very familiar: she is an entrepreneurial and creative problem solver who likes new ideas and starting things; someone who can take on a challenge, analyze it, figure it out, and then get people to see what needed to be done. But the profiling instruments also indicated that she is strongly motivated by community service, a quality that came as quite a surprise to her:

> *Betsey*: I didn't really even know what community service meant. [They told me] that I was motivated to do things that would make the world a better place. And I said, "Really?" This is interesting to me because I didn't really think of myself that way per se.

Paul feels that his attraction to a life of service and advocating for improving the social condition in some way came naturally to him, and even began early on in his life, having been raised in a family of Christian ministers. Throughout our interviews, Paul regularly referred to his church-oriented heritage, and the impact that had on his beliefs and the direction he ultimately took in shifting to a service-oriented career in the nonprofit world ("I have ancestors who were evangelists… it amuses me sometimes to think of myself as having become an evangelist in my own sort of way.") At the same time, he acknowledges those in the business world who serve others through their business work.

> *Paul*: Listen, I was there [in the business world] for 30 years [laughs]… I don't want to sound in any way smug… or self-righteous about having, kind of escaped the whorehouse. I really don't feel that way about it. I'm personally glad to be in a different environment [laughs], where the main vectors every day are quite different.

When Victoria's "business" career took her to a position at a small liberal arts college, she got a taste of what it might mean to be working in the context of mission and service. Later, when her life at the manufacturing company became overly problematic (an organization she felt was "mission-less"), she finally transformed a life-long feeling of being "buffeted about in making [career] choices." She says it was the first time in her career that she had an absolute realization that she wanted to be in the nonprofit world. "I really wanted to be involved in an organization that had a clear and absolute mission…Where everyone knew why they were walking in the door."

Commitment to a Place

A general *mission of service* is only one part of the equation that was expressed by the research participants as they considered the shift to the nonprofit sector. The *object* of that mission and service was also important. For the participants in this study, that object was, for the most part, a commitment to a particular place and the quality of life for people who live there. This emotional connection to place is reflective of *topophilia*, defined as "the affective bond between people and place or setting" (Tuan, 1974, p.4). As Paul became disenchanted with work life in the large big-city law-firm, his thoughts and dreams focused on a life in the rural county environment where many years earlier he had purchased a second ("weekend") home. He envisioned living the life of an independent country lawyer in a place he loved, working only for clients whose purpose was to make the County a better place to live:

> *Paul*: "I was going to basically have a conservation law practice and not charge a lot of money, so I could have clients like these [people served by the nonprofit land conservancy he now runs].

Paul's commitment to that rural county had begun twenty-five years earlier, while he was still a big city lawyer. As a weekend resident of the County, his credentials as an up-and-coming

environmental lawyer led him to be elected to the board of the local land conservancy. As his law career advanced, Paul had spent more and more time serving on that board, and as his involvement with the organization grew, likewise, his attachment to the "place" strengthened as well.

> *Paul*: As I got less interested in what I was doing as a lawyer, I devoted more and more time to [the county land conservancy], which I really got into. I was very involved here, [first] with the board, and then [with] the Executive Director and staff. I really loved the organization and I developed a real interest and commitment to the County.

James' story is somewhat different. His topophilia was less to the physical setting and ambiance, than to a social familiarity. The reader will recall that his major platform as a candidate for securing his first executive job in the nonprofit world was his commitment to the community where he lived. Now that he is been in the field of community fund raising for several years, he is very much in touch with the importance to him of his commitment to improving the quality of life right where he lives.

> *James*: I care about this community. I like where I live, and obviously I've been here for 19 years, so I have a lot of affinity to this community. So having the opportunity to run this organization within this community means a lot, because of the history, you know, making this a better place to live. To relocate, to take advantage of one of those jobs and move, and become the 'whatever' within that community. Hmmm, I look at that, and go "I'm not sure that I can do that, because I don't know anything about that community. I don't have the history of that community; I don't know where the bodies are buried. I don't know the players. I don't even know if I like that community…" That sort of thing.

When asked if he would care about "community" any less if he returned to the business of selling newspaper advertising, James replied:

> *James*: I guess if I decided to get back into it, I could go anywhere in the country, and go work for a newspaper and fit in easier, because [I would be] selling advertising, and working *business*. The community piece exists, but it's not as important because you're coming in, you're selling and selling and selling and selling…. Obviously, you're going to need to learn the players within that community, but it doesn't feel as important that you know the community necessarily going in. Versus, in the world of community fundraising, having that affinity to the community that you're in, I think that's very important. I think it's a valuable ingredient as to why you have the job, versus just someone who has the job.

The downside caveat: Will I be able to make enough money?

Financial stability was an important issue for several of the research participants when they were still in the corporate world and exploring nonprofit career opportunities. Prior to considering a career shift, one of the biggest preconceived notions that they expressed about the nonprofit sector was that there was no money there, and that you could not support yourself -- or at least it would be very difficult -- with a nonprofit salary. James felt it could work for him.

> *James*: I was a guy that was looking at getting my kids through college, looking for stability, looking to be engaged with my whole brain, hoping that I could land at a place where I could do some good, and combined all those other things and you know, make a decent amount of compensation so that I can afford to live. I thought that there was a big stable upside to it.

Even after acknowledging to herself that money was <u>not</u> a critical factor in her staying at her for-profit job, Betsey recognized how much the *idea* of "needing money" kept her in her job, and prevented her from considering a shift to the nonprofit world.

> *Betsey*: People need to take a look at what's important for them before they make any kind of change; to really understand what motivates them and what they want to do. [When I was still in the for-profit world], I did an analysis about my priorities in life [and discovered] how money was really low on the priority list. [Even so,] it still took me two [more] years to make a decision about work that was going to bring me less money. I would talk to myself all the time. I'd say, "Self, you said money is not an important thing, [yet money is] the only thing holding you back from doing this." That was really eye-opening, because I'm in agreement with myself, and money is not a driver; it's not that important.

James suggests that once someone considers personal self-satisfaction and fulfillment in the workplace as a higher priority than money, the choice should be clear:

> *James*: The question is what is it [that] you ultimately want to do. You may not be able to make quite the dollars [in the nonprofit sector] that you historically made [in the business world], but if you're miserable doing it, you've got to make a choice. I mean, is it all going to be about money, or do you want to try to fill your years and your days with something that you're going to feel pretty good about doing?

The "money issue" always seemed to arise when James talked with friends in the newspaper business about the possibility of a move to the nonprofit world:

> *James*: Of course I looked at nonprofit opportunities and said, "Well, you can't make any money," and obviously I've got kids that are getting ready to go to college. You have to be very careful about where you leap.

But as they considered the shift more seriously, the participants each acknowledged that they did not need to earn a large salary to sustain their lifestyle or their families. Most had done well-enough financially in their respective for-profit careers and several of them had spouses with good jobs as well. But often, the thought persisted that one needs to make a lot of money:

> *Betsey*: I was really fixated on [needing to earn a lot of money] and I think that's just because… If you grew up without a lot of money, or a moderate amount of money, there may be more uncertainty about where you are going to make your next dollar. In the end, it is true you don't make as much money in the nonprofit sector, but you can certainly make enough money to live on. You definitely can. And so it was kind of a silly distraction.

The Job Hunt

Each of the participants in this study had a different approach to the search for their nonprofit position. For Paul, moving from his private law practice to the nonprofit sector was an easy choice to make:

> *Paul:* I was ready. I mean, I was ripe for the picking, because I had no qualms about leaving the [law] firm. I knew I wanted to do that anyway. I was ready to move up here [to a rural County two hours from his original home]. I had already made those decisions. The notion of working as a nonprofit person in some social services kind of context [was]… very compatible with me.

Paul considered his actual shift to the nonprofit world as "not a very noble story." He reflected that he was <u>not</u> like the cartoon about a man unhappy in business, saying he wants to go out and intentionally "Do God's work", and deciding strategically that he should seek wonderful opportunities in the nonprofit world where he would apply for and find his dream job. This is not what happened to Paul. Before applying for the job as executive director of a local land conservancy, Paul had no dreams to become a professional "player" in the land conservation movement, and certainly no aspiration to be a leader at the national level. Applying for the

particular nonprofit job that came his way "was just what I wanted to do, and I happen to love [this County]. I love this organization. I'm just totally a lucky guy."

Betsey used her interest in economics and the well-honed analytical skills she developed during her corporate consulting career to assess the first job opportunity she was offered in the nonprofit world.

> *Betsey:* Having worked with a lot of companies in startup, mergers, and transition, [I was] viewing this opportunity [to work for a nonprofit] objectively, where you had a really great organization… and a great product. They just didn't have money and they didn't know how to manage the money they had… From a corporate perspective… I felt that the problems [there] were solvable, and it was a good investment… It was definitely from a corporate mindset [that] I was looking at it.

Notwithstanding years of experience and management skills well-honed in the business world, doubts can still persist for anyone making the shift from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector. For example, Paul was confident that he had the skills needed to be successful as executive director of a land conservancy; (e.g. managing a staff; speaking eloquently in public settings on behalf of the organization; and administering the functional tasks associated with the job), but he had trepidations about the one skill he knew he would need, but in which he had virtually no professional experience in his former business life, namely, the fundraising role of the position. He had a sense of what would be needed to raise money, but recognized that he had no firsthand experience on which to fall back.

> *Paul*: As you can tell, I have some ambivalence somewhere in my psyche about things having to do with money and all of that. So there was a question in my mind, I suppose, that was somewhat a little bit of an uncertainty, or perhaps anxiety [about fundraising]. Of course, [having never done it before], I couldn't have felt what it feels like to actually have the responsibility [to raise money]. I remember talking to [the former executive director] when I was on the board, and on occasion she would unload to me about the weight of having to raise that money every year. [I remember] feeling like in the end, no matter what else anybody said, it was basically all on her. She had to do it. If she didn't do it, she would have to fire people. And I could hear those words and know what they mean. [But if I said those same words] to you… [you wouldn't feel] it the way you would [as] if you had the job and that responsibility.

Victoria adds two additional issues into the job hunt mix. First, she pointed out how important. a subjective feeling of "fit" can be. She said she "danced" for about 10 years, with the idea of moving from the business world to the nonprofit world. It certainly was not a sudden decision. She thought about working in a number of different places, but never felt that the organizational missions were quite right. For example, she considered working for a housing development organization, but after thinking about it, she chose not to ("I knew the work, valued the work, and respected the work, but [it was] not something that would really speak to me… to my heart")

Second, Victoria was very strategic about the process of choosing which nonprofit organization, she would work for. At first, she narrowed her search in the nonprofit world down to four fields (animal welfare, education, environmental affairs, and the arts). She would go home at night and work out various decision-making matrices. She says this was the first time in her entire career that she approached a career move with such deliberation (all the others had been just to get another "job"). But in the end, the "right" nonprofit organization showed up totally out of the blue, when a friend suggested to Victoria that she apply for a position at the Humane Society where she had once adopted a cat.

Early experiences in the Nonprofit setting

In this section I address the many differences the participants said they experienced when they first entered the nonprofit work environment following a career in the business world. As I describe below, sometimes there was no difference at all.

Experiencing a difference (or not)

As the research participants indicated, people who work in business companies might have a preconceived notion that they would not be able to find satisfying work in the nonprofit world because of the great differences between the two environments. We have already seen that questions can arise regarding low compensation ("I'll have to work for less money."), and

whether skills and experience will apply across the sectors ("What kind of work can I find there?"). But as Betsey experienced, some people in the business world might not be very certain as to what those differences actually are.

> *Betsey*: [My friends in the business world] never could really put their finger on exactly what was different. It wasn't specific, and definitely not based on anybody's personal experience, or anything that they had been exposed to. They were just, like, "Wow, it's going to be really different."

Because of Paul's extensive tenure as a board member of nonprofit organizations, and perhaps because of his professional focus on environmental law, he felt that he had a sense going in of what to expect in a nonprofit land conservancy with regard to "the politics, the fund-raising, the kind of competition between organizations, professionals, jealousy, that sort of thing."

While Betsey's business friends and colleagues may have warned her that she would find the nonprofit world significantly different, she found in her direct experience (as with Paul but for different reasons) that there were actually more similarities than differences in the application of her skills.

> *Betsey*: It was like I was walking through the woods, finding my way and waiting for it to feel to be really different, and I found that [the organization] was totally speaking my language. It didn't seem that different. Maybe it was. I didn't know what was different. I was using a lot of the same skills: my analytical skills; my problem-solving skills; figuring things out.

Over the time she has been in the nonprofit world, Betsey has noticed two related issues that do reflect differences between the two worlds. First, with respect to salaries, in business, people are paid (and expect) compensation based pretty much exclusively on job-task related issues, such as the specific skills needed for the job, past related work experience, and other professional qualifications and credentials. In the nonprofit sector, Betsey feels that a commitment or passion for the mission of the nonprofit organization tends to be a much more significant factor in hiring decisions by employers, and at the same time (and perhaps as a trade-off for their commitment to the mission), prospective employees seem willing to accept relatively lower salaries than their counterparts in the business world.

Second, Betsey notes a difference in the factors that motivate job satisfaction. In the world of international management consulting, her satisfaction with work was related primarily to stimulating her personal intellect and to mastering certain professional skills (organizational problem-solving and analysis), but the specifics of *what* she was doing with that intellect and skills (i.e., as she says, "to save some other corporation lots of money") was not sufficient to keep her satisfied and fulfilled in the face of a variety circumstances that drained her motivation. In the nonprofit sector, Betsey not only finds that she is still utilizing her intellect, skills and experience; she is also now leveraging those skills and experience to further the organization's higher mission of service, and as a result, she experiences greater personal meaning in working on behalf of that larger purpose. The *what* of her work life in the nonprofit service sector has become a source of personal satisfaction and fulfillment.

Based on her direct experience as a long-term business executive, and after many years serving as a volunteer board member for nonprofit organizations (a YWCA, an educational attraction, a Museum, several social service agencies, and a number of arts organizations), Victoria suggests that the mission-context of nonprofit organizations keeps them more targeted in their direction, an impact on organizational strategic decision-making that she had not seen in the for-profit business world where she feels "mission" is more mutable.

> *Victoria:* A for-profit company can always change its mission, and also its mission is driven by its bottom line, because its first commitment is not the mission; its first mission is to its shareholders and its stakeholders… It is a lot more difficult for a nonprofit to deviate from that. And if it starts to deviate from its mission, then it's going to start jeopardizing its 501(c)3 status because it is not meeting its obligations.

James felt a difference in "working style" when he moved from being a newspaper advertising executive to leading a community fundraising organization:

> *James*: I have to laugh in a way… The pressure within this job, I don't feel is remotely as intense as anything I've ever experienced in the newspaper business. It is fractional. When I talk to people about donating to the [community fundraising campaign], I'm touching a different part of the heart than when I was talking to them about [buying] advertising. I think I'm much calmer [than I was in the advertising business]. I'm more

at peace. I feel challenged; I like my job a lot; I'm very engaged by it; but it's not killing me.

Betsey also reported a difference she experienced in the nonprofit "workplace lifestyle", but from another angle, namely at the intersection between personal life and work life. For example, at the time when she was head of the economics practice at a branch office of an international financial consulting firm, Betsey recalled how she was expected to participate in a business conference call from her hospital bed after having just given birth to her first child. She reported that in the for-profit companies where she worked, it was acceptable to miss a meeting because of another conflicting task within the company (say another client meeting scheduled at the same time); but it was not acceptable to miss a meeting because "I wanted to go spend time with my child or something like that." In essence, in her for-profit work life Betsey experienced a "the-job-has-to-come-first" culture.

Betsey has found the nonprofit world to be more flexible and less demanding on the time of its workers, especially in grassroots organizations where people often work very hard on very challenging (i.e., socially complex and urgent) missions. For her, it is "culturally and socially accepted [in the nonprofit sector] that you're not going to be working 24 – 7 on what you're doing; on your mission."

When Paul is out trying to rally support for his nonprofit land conservancy from the community, he senses a nuanced difference from the days when he was an attorney trying to rally up more business. He says the experience is similar, "but so much better:"

> *Paul*: It's not just trying to get business… Actually, this harks back to my real roots [as a preacher's son] because what I realize… it's a form of evangelism. I am now in the position of wanting to spread the good news to people. This is really a cool organization, it's really good for the county, and people should be really grateful that we are here and excited about it: learning what we do and what we *can* do, and how much more we *could* do if we had little more money. That's so much better than, "Please, hire me to be your lawyer. I'm a great lawyer. I'm a better lawyer than him, because I do [whatever], so give me your business." It's a very different kind of sales job [in the nonprofit sector], and it's fun.

Early days on the job

The early experiences of the participants in the nonprofit sector were characterized significantly by their efforts to become comfortable with their "new" work and career environment. As described below, *comfortable* can be a function of being *confident* in understanding the norms and behaviors expected of them; being *self-assured* in facing unfamiliar circumstances and situations; and *easily learning* the skills, style, and patterns of organizational activity and relationships. The stories in the following three sections exemplify how the participants learned whatever it was they thought they needed to know in order to work effectively in their new nonprofit jobs.

Learning the ropes

Paul reported that at the start of his tenure at his nonprofit land conservancy, he was quite confident about figuring out what he needed to know. After all, he had been a board member of the organization for over two decades and pretty much knew the operational and strategic components of the organization. So as far as learning the day-to-day aspects of the organization, he says, "I didn't really lose a lot of sleep about that." Nonetheless, from the start, Paul knew that he could not question everything that was going on in hopes of understanding the nuances of running the organization. He decided to leverage the experience and trust of what he considered a good staff , especially the person who had been co-Executive Director in an interim capacity, and who was very supportive and helpful when Paul first took the job. Over the first three months, Paul took on a slow-and-steady attitude rather than immediately injecting himself directly and deeply into projects that were ongoing. “I had to sort of grow into something… I just made the decision that I couldn't do everything at once.”

Even so, after several months of being on the job, frustrations within the staff began to emerge as unattended work issues came to the surface that had been lingering in the organization for some time before Paul had arrived. Paul felt badly as he saw the early good feelings and positive expectations begin to decline into a serious drop in staff morale.

> *Paul*: Morale just had reached the pit. I think everyone had thought, "Oh, this new guy is coming in…" First of all, I had been a board member, so I was, like, "The Man" you know? They didn't know [that] I didn't know what the heck I was doing -- a lawyer from [the big city]. They didn't really know me that well… They'd had a lot of frustrations that they had been putting up with for a long time. I think everyone sort of naturally thinks, "Oh, the new guy is going to… and everything is going to get resolved…"

James's story of starting off was somewhat different. The reader will recall that James's platform as a candidate for the presidency of the local chapter of a national community fundraising organization was that he already knew the community, and that he could easily learn the ropes of being a community fundraiser. He handled this by attending a national "boot camp" for newly appointed presidents of local community fundraising chapters; the training was sponsored by the national parent organization of his local chapter. The boot camp experience accelerated James's appreciation not only for the field, but for the people in the field, and expanded his professional network:

> *James*: It was a three-day indoctrination of all things [community fundraising]. It was total sensory overload, but I walked away with a general feeling that [the national organization is] very good and while [I didn't] agree with everything, I felt really good about the management. I felt good about the operation. I walked away going, "Yeah, these guys are good;' versus, the worst-case scenario where like, "Uh-oh… These guys are a bunch of bozos." I didn't get that sense at all. I thought they were pretty tight, pretty well run, pretty well-intentioned.… I guess that was important for me… And I made a handful of new president-friends… that I've kept in touch with… in different parts of the country.

Betsey's prior business experience as a management consultant gave her the general tools and tricks she needed to know about running organizations in any given industry, field, or sector. So when starting off on her nonprofit career, Betsey became versed in the special issues regarding nonprofits by identifying the key journals, newsletters, and websites that would hold the information she needed. And as a self-proclaimed master networker, she knew that there were thought leaders and trusted voices to whom she should turn for information, direction, and resources. The Chronicle of Philanthropy (professional periodical), Charity Navigator (web-based charity evaluator), Bridgestar (support organization), and Blue Avocado (on-line magazine)

were three critical sources she used to identify information on best practices in the nonprofit sector.

First days

Each of the research participants reported their own unique experience of starting in the nonprofit world. Paul, who had spent many years working as a private attorney felt a little tentative when he began his new career, especially in light of the challenges he found when he got there:

> *Paul:* It had been many years since I had walked into an office in a 'new job.' On some level, I must have had some insecurities [sic] about that… There were some real issues here to be dealt with in terms of staff morale. The whole experience of the preceding 18 months had been quite traumatic on the staff, and so there were some real challenging issues in that regard. And I felt I had a really big learning curve.

For James, our former newspaper advertising executive, his first days as president of a local community fundraising organization were a locomotive ride which somehow seemed familiar:

> *James*: I started on Monday, four days before we had our kickoff breakfast to start the [annual campaign]. So basically the train had left the station and I caught the last car, and so I spent my next six months working my way up the cars to try to get to the engine, and through that process, it was predominately getting out and seeing folks, predominantly doing that in the workplace. That hat was no different than going out and selling an ad campaign, and seeing a bunch of different people…"

Admittedly, James was already a well-known business executive in the community in which he "suddenly" became a professional nonprofit executive. As such, he was pleased to find a tremendously positive reception from his former business colleagues. In fact, he called his first year on the job as "a kind of coronation" where people consistently acknowledged his new role, and repeatedly said that he was perfect for the job, and what a great opportunity his presence would be for the community organizations for which he would be raising money. Nonetheless, James found out that the good feelings would settle down to a much cooler response:

> *James:* …the joke was that for those [first] 15 or 20 phone calls that I made, people actually called [me] back. And you know, [I had] come from the ad business where no

> one calls you back. You're six calls in and you're still not getting a phone call back. I can remember my first couple of weeks, I had called somebody and I'd [left] them a message; and you know, they called me back that afternoon [laughs]. [I said,] "I love this business [laughs vigorously]!" Well, unfortunately, I did not realize that after I got through those first 20 [calls], that was it, [laughs] and I was back in the hole, chasing people that were never going to call [me] back.

Betsey, our international management consultant-turned-children's center director, also felt that her early nonprofit circumstances could be addressed through the business style she had learned in prior corporate career. For example, when she arrived on the job, she immediately addressed the financial resources of the organization by instituting an annual fundraising appeal focusing on support from big donors. While the organization had a good database of contacts, its analysis of donors was weak. Her "corporate" expectation of having the data she would need to target her action, led to initial frustration:

> *Betsey*: In that first week, I was trying to figure out who were our top 10 donors. I could not figure it out from the database without sort of making these giant printouts, and looking at it. I was like, "That's ridiculous. Information should be available at my fingertips. Donor databases are a standard tool that everybody should be using."

Getting acquainted through strategic planning

Both Betsey and Paul found that a strategic planning process in the first year of their tenure was a good way not only to sort and tease out important issues for action, but also a great way to learn about the organization. In Paul's case, the year-long strategic planning process was "conveniently" timed with his arrival; "it was kind of a big motivator; it kind of brought a lot of things together." In particular, the planning process addressed staff issues that needed to be resolved, especially in light of the fact that Paul had been a long-term board member and was now the staff "boss."

In Betsey's case, the planning process grew out of her corporate management orientation with respect to the governance of the organization (i.e., the board's role). After six months on the job, she organized a board retreat. Prior to her arrival, the board had been assuming responsibility for many management functions of the organization. The board's leadership

wanted to step back and regroup/refocus the board's role from direct operational involvement to governance. With her corporate approach to teambuilding, Betsey encouraged the board to meet in a retreat without her:

> *Betsey*: I know that a group that needs to function well as a team, needs to meet as a team. Even though we would work together, the board needed to be by themselves. They needed to come together, so I really thought it was great.

Out of the board retreat, a strategic planning process was begun. The organization gathered a lot of organizational performance data and benchmarking information that led to setting specific action priorities, namely, to focus on fundraising (donor development) and board-building (identifying and recruiting more board members who could bring skills to the table that the organization needed).

Conclusion

Time spent in the nonprofit environment seems to bring a comforting sense of confidence to those who started their careers in the business world. Nonetheless, feelings of insecurity, lack of knowledge, and uncertainty might linger. After more than three years in the community fund raising world, James has successfully met many of the challenges of his new career, and he feels good about his successes. He says he feels "very solid, very confident" when it comes to managing a community fund raising campaign, meeting deadlines, marketing, messaging, revamping strategies, etc. However, he continues to find the auditing process (matching pledges and payments) somewhat of a mystery:

> *James*: I'm not that well versed, and I'm struggling a little bit [over financial matters]…… I could probably talk easier about many aspects of the newspaper business – – and I've been out of it for six years – – than I can about some aspects of the world of community fund raising, particularly when it comes to finances.

Resistance to someone from the business world

In the anecdotes I describe in the previous section, the participants may have found themselves uncomfortable in one way or another during their early days on the nonprofit scene, but generally speaking, they were able to effectively address unfamiliar challenges in the

nonprofit sector by using familiar "business" ways of doing business. As we'll see in this section, strategic approaches derived from a business-oriented organizational context may not fly well in the face of the nonprofit mindset.

When Betsey started her nonprofit life, she noticed that many of the skills and tools she took for granted in her for-profit world did not seem to fit in the nonprofit sector, and at best were considered by her nonprofit colleagues as something "new".

> *Betsey*: Many of the tools and things I was bringing were not innovative from my perspective. They were sort of standard business type ways of looking at things. But it was… a very different way of looking at things for most people [around me in the nonprofit organization.

In his early nonprofit experience, Donald met with a similar, but more negative reaction to conventional management principles he brought with him from a direct marketing background in the banking industry. In fact, he found that certain concepts that he brought in from his business life, such as "market research" and "return on investment," were dismissed ("There was an apprehension to all this business stuff.") At least at the nonprofit organization he first joined, Donald had no way of knowing the "nonprofit way," and the organization provided no training programs for him to learn the ropes. There was no guide on how to do things. There were no educational resources in nonprofit management he was aware of that he could turn to. While he later on discovered that he could find such resources at the local university and through the national professional association, the organization he worked for did not provide any staff orientation or management training that would enable him to understand how to translate his business skills to the nonprofit setting. Worse yet, his own "corporate" strategic orientation was not at all well received:

> *Donald*: When I started using words like *marketing* and *sales*, I got dirty looks across leadership table... I was at one point told by my director, I talk too much like a business person. I don't talk *nonprofity* [sic] enough… I felt like they were looking at me like a plaid jacket car salesman.

Donald took these experiences personally; he was offended. The organization had no difficulty developing new programs or revising older ones based on programmatic criteria and choices. But to examine those programs from a financial orientation (What is the "return on investment?") or to explore new market opportunities (How best to "cross-sell?") was not only uncomfortable for the staff; these "enterprise-oriented" ways of looking at things were rejected ("It was a cultural rejection of business practices").

Donald felt that he was fighting to be heard. He thought that his voice was being muffled and his counsel set aside by his superiors, and he was told that he should rather be focusing on the more mundane aspect of his position; namely, to prepare press releases. Nonetheless, Donald pressed on, conducting market analyses and preparing management reports that showed which programs were actually generating more earned revenue as measured against their expenses. To his dismay and frustration, he felt that his presentations of findings were resented by his fellow managers.

> *Donald*: I felt like I was personally shunned. I did not feel like part of the group. I felt like I was constantly forcing my views. My views were not being openly received. It was not a time of great acceptance and my creativity was coming from the marketing end. I felt sort of like the artists were revolting against me, but at the same time, I felt that I was an artist. The marketing and the business analysis was my art, and my art was getting rejected by the other people that were more in the tradition of the organization. I think they perceived it as foreign.

In part, Donald attributes the "foreign" quality to the fact that he was the only executive at the organization who held a business degree and who had worked at a major bank for several years. He was an outsider ("It was sort of a 'Who are YOU?' kind of attitude, [toward me for] introducing the stuff. 'What do YOU know about nonprofits?'")

But "foreign" was not the only reason that Donald felt his "businesslike" approaches were not being accepted. He was actually revealing how unprofitable some of the operations were, and shedding light on practices that he considered to be unfair, such as the lack of health insurance benefits, that were minimizing reported expenses.

> *Donald*: In many ways, I thought that what was going on [there] was criminal, in what I thought was the flushing down and wasting of money and resources.

In one instance, an analysis Donald ran indicated that a technology training program, considered by the organization's senior management to be their premier money-making activity, was actually costing the organization more than other, less high-profile programs. Donald recommended a reallocation of resources to those other programs. He says that management reaction to his recommendation was negative:

> *Donald*: I was shedding light on unprofitable operations, and no one liked that… it was more of a passive aggressiveness to new practices; to stuff they didn't understand… No one wanted to assess how they were doing things, and they also might've thought of me as sort of the bull in the china cabinet…. I was saying, "Do less [high-cost, low-revenue programming] and more [low-cost, high-revenue programming]…" That's not what they wanted to hear.

This reaction did not surprise him. None of the other managers in the organization at that time held formal business management degrees, as he did. To them, the mission of the organization superseded organizational efficiencies; in the above example, serving the public with state-of-the-art educational programs was more important than making program decisions on the basis of a purely financial analysis. While Donald knew that "return on investment" might not be an important criterion for management decision-making in a nonprofit organization as much as it might in a commercial company, he nonetheless found that "nobody expressed to me 'This is our mission, and that is why we have to disregard your return on investment information.' "

Ultimately, Donald's approach proved unacceptable to the organization. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the organization came to tell Donald that he would have to resign. Donald felt as if he had been banished:

> *Donald*: What was expressed to me (what I felt coming back at me) was… a resentment of the business practices, and it was like I was infiltrating the territory…. They were looking at this more as "This is our nonprofit club. Don't be messing with our club." [Rather than saying] this is a nonprofit whose responsibility is the public good, [they said] "This is my little nonprofit toy."

Donald acknowledges that this was his first experience with the nonprofit world and that he learned some hard lessons in that first job. For example, he says that even though a number of the rank-and-file employees in that organization took his side in feeling that not enough business analysis was being done at the organization, he also acknowledges that he was ineffective in building support for his thinking from senior management, or the Board of Trustees. He failed to create champions for his ideas among higher ups (a strategy he now teaches to for-profit executives who aspire to be nonprofit managers). Donald sums this early experience, this way:

> *Donald*: I still feel that the concepts that I brought were right…. Did I worry about how I was introducing them? No. Did I have a champion who wanted these notions to be introduced? No. So that put me at a disadvantage… Even though I thought I knew there were other criteria that decided on what this nonprofit should do, it was so devoid of financial analysis that I felt it was my duty to keep pushing, even though people were telling me to shut up and do the press releases.

We will re-visit Donald's experience in the next chapter, and look more closely at the issues that were at play here.

Reflecting on the nonprofit mindset

At the end of the previous section, Donald reveals something potentially fundamental about working in the nonprofit world. We might call it a new perspective or discrete *nonprofit mindset*. In this section, we explore the emergent attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, norms, and feelings that the participants took on as they became immersed in their nonprofit world. In the literature, this inner landscape of a person's relationship to work and career is called *subjective career identity* (citation).

Subjective career and personal work identity in the nonprofit world

> *Betsey*: [Burt Woolf's dissertation interview process has been] a unique opportunity to even just think about questions beyond, "Hi, my name is Betsey and this is what I do," to really think about why I am doing this. And I found that just being able to step back to look at the big picture, and think about it; and then also, to actually look more closely too. That's just [not] something [you do] in your normal [daily life], and to do it not just

> yourself talking inside your head, but actually having someone who was talking to you and other people -- framing the issue, and asking questions…

Betsey's reflection on the interview process for this study provides a glimpse of the inner landscape that shapes one's relationship to work and career. For the most part, people tend to think about work and career in an objective sense; that is, in the context of objective external circumstances, such as their professional credentials, job title, salary, position in the organizational hierarchy, promotions they may have had, etc. But as Betsey points out, the opportunity to reflect on the very personal aspects of work and career is something special, unusual, and even "unique." *Subjective career* is what we call this this inner personal view of work over a lifetime. The participants for this study described their subjective careers as nonprofit executives in two different ways: from an *internal self-perspective* (that is, how they view themselves in the context of work); and from an *external public image* (that is, how they feel they are viewed by others). As we shall see in the third section below, a new vision for the nonprofit world can result from subjective thinking about career.

Self-perspective

An internal self-perspective of career was triggered when I asked Paul how he felt about his work and career as a nonprofit executive "right now."

> *Paul*: I feel pretty comfortable that I'm doing a good job, and I actually know quite a bit; and that I have a right to be in this chair and have this job… If I was 40, probably there are some things I would think, or do, or aspire to, that I don't think, or do, or aspire to because I'm 62. I'm not thinking about my next career move. I'm not thinking, "Geesh. I'd like to be the head of [a large environmental organization] someday, or something like that… This is a job I'm going to do as long as I enjoy doing it. I'm not going to say it's the last job I'll ever have, because I don't know; life is full of surprises, but it would be fine with me, as I see things now, if that were the case. And I'm a very lucky guy to feel that way, I think. I mean, I feel very much at peace with that. I stopped wanting to be President of the United States a long time ago.

An expression of subjective career can also occur when someone asks "What do you do for a living?" When people ask Betsey such a question, her response emphasizes not only the national scope of her organization and the exciting national network that she is putting together

on behalf of family grieving centers, but also her view of herself as a professional in the nonprofit world:

> *Betsey*: I definitely consider myself to be a social entrepreneur. Everything I do is about doing something new and different. I want to stay in an entrepreneurial setting… I am a networker. I'm very connected, and I really care about communications and having a quality product that's delivered, but also being really efficient about the resources that were using. Those [are the] adjectives I use to describe my work. My skills are being analytical, solving problems, doing a really good job, and focusing on making sure that whatever I'm doing, I'm doing it the best way I can; the most efficient way I can. I want to continue to work in organizations where the challenge is to have a great mission and not just to go in a job that's already been defined, replacing somebody who did that job last year.

Given that Donald is in the business of training nonprofit executives to be more effective, he also sees his career and worklife identity in the nonprofit sector as a blend of producing quality professional programs and services that will generate valuable results to benefit society.

> *Donald*: Moving from the corporate sector to the nonprofit sector, I'm very secure in what I'm doing, because I'm doing it well… Everything we do, everything that I design is based on quality. It is based on what I think is the best thing to do.… It frustrates the hell out of me when things don't work; and in the nonprofit sector, I want things to work. The nonprofit sector does some great stuff, but it can do better. There is this huge [potential]; we are at nonprofit 2.0, we can bring it to nonprofit 7.0… I want to help the nonprofit sector have a stronger impact on our communities, and I know they want that too. So I'm trying to help them by educating them on how to manage their nonprofits; [and] how to collaborate together.

James expressed a third orientation for his personal identity -- that of an energized and motivated learner – – perhaps shaped by the many years that he worked as an advertising executive in the world of community newspapers before taking on his new role three years ago as the CEO of a community fund raising organization:

> *James*: As I continue to get smarter and get more exposed to more pieces of this… nonprofit industry, I continue to learn, and I consider myself a pretty avid learner, and I like the new challenges. So my capability and my abilities within my new job continue to grow, but I've still got a long ways to go. I don't know this industry nearly as well as I want to know it, and I still don't know it as well as I do the newspaper industry… Trust me, I don't wake up thinking about the newspaper business anymore. If I had to put that hat on, I could put it on pretty comfortably…but probably, through my [current] work, I very much see it's all about community building; it's all about a better community.… The

intention and the work is really that community building part, and that's the part I find exciting.

Notwithstanding his identify as a "learner" James' still finds himself consternated by the financial complexity of his organization. With multiple fundraising campaigns spanning different fiscal years (some of which are not contiguous with the fiscal years of corporate donors), the financial tracking of pledges, payments, payroll deductions, and corporate matching grants can seem daunting, even to a former seasoned corporate professional.

> *James*: I will tell you that I'm not comfortable not knowing certain things; it drives me nuts. The biggest challenging piece that I've had [in] making the change [to the nonprofit sector] has been the financial… back end of the operation in [community fund raising]: …all the tracking of pledge work, the accounts receivable. I work with budgets, you know. We had an $8 million budget in the ad department at the [newspaper], and we are a $1 million and change organization here [at this community fundraising organization]; [yet] this thing is 10 times more complex than anything I ever experienced over [at the newspaper].

Paul speaks about his identity in two ways: first, as a nonprofit executive he makes the distinction between two "postures" that are possible for people who work in the environmental field: one that is adversarial and divisive, and one that draws people together toward some higher common purpose:

> *Paul*: One model of… life is that of a *crusader*. You know, someone who knows what's right, and is going to go out and fight for it.… I've always resisted being a crusader. There is a sort of hubris associated [with that approach]. Literally, in the crusades [the attitude was], "I'm going to kill you because you don't believe what's right…." So it isn't like I feel like I'm wearing a white hat necessarily; like slaying dragons.
>
> I feel very happy to be now in a totally different posture. The kinds of things we get involved in [as a land conservation organization] can be among the most divisive things in the world… but they can also bring people together. I really believe that at root, almost everybody who lives in [this county] values the same things that we value... There is a tremendous amount of… commonality in terms of appreciation of the landscape, and appreciation of the natural conservation values that exist.
>
> So what I like is not being in an adversarial posture anymore, as much as I can help it, but approaching things in a way that is designed to try to find commonality, to bring people together, rather than to tear them apart.… I find that for myself, personally (and it's a little ironic because I was mostly a litigator as a lawyer), I find it a more gratifying

posture, and one that I feel more comfortable with, personally. I would be more comfortable fighting your fight for you, than fighting my fight for me.

Paul's second identity is derived from his personal lifestyle, which is rooted in the rural county to which he has become professionally committed for the three years he has been the director of the local land conservancy:

> *Paul*: I love living up here. I love not having two houses. We've got some goats we're milking. We've got chickens. I love all that stuff. I cut wood. We're heating our house with wood. I'm in good physical shape, and I just, you know, I like all that a lot. I'm loving not being a lawyer.

Public Image

The second component of *subjective career* is how one feels about the opinions that others hold. Paul addressed one of the classic externally driven identity stereotypes of nonprofit workers:

> *Paul*: Historically, and maybe to some extent today, I think there is a sense in the profit-making the world of looking down on the nonprofit world as slackers, or people who only want to work 35 hours per week; that… there are fewer type A personalities, perhaps in the nonprofit world. It's probably true that there are fewer type A's in the nonprofit world. There is an element of truth to that stereotype I suspect.

I asked Paul if such a stereotype bothered him:

> *Paul*: I might have worried about it [at one time]; in fact it might be one reason I didn't go into the nonprofit world when I was 30… but I'm not 30 anymore.

A nonprofit organization's role in the community is a significant factor in the external identity that it offers to senior nonprofit executives. James articulated his community identity as president of the local chapter of a national community fund raising organization:

> *James*: You become a player within your own community. As [our] organization continues to develop… we're becoming more and more of a go-to institution within the community, and while that's not a specific target, it's happening… As we continue to build that foundation… there is a great opportunity to continue to grow… as a community player, and have a seat at the table for [addressing community] issues. I can't tell what those issues might be, but I think that it's a good role for us to play, and I kind of like that part of it. I like the opportunity to get involved and to get challenged.

But is it enough to identify oneself as a nonprofit executive, when you once were a senior player in the corporate world? When Paul talks with former professional colleagues in the legal profession, he notices that they perceive his career in the nonprofit world as an envious counterpoint to their business life:

> *Paul*: I virtually never have an exchange with [colleagues who stayed in law] who [don't] tell me how jealous they are of me… [It's] not that they don't like *their* work; I think many of them enjoy practicing law, but they don't like the same stuff I didn't like. They don't like the bullshit of the law firm: the upside down priorities of billable hours, accounting hours, making money at it -- thinking about it all as a business proposition, and not a service to their clients. Of course they talk about service to their clients and all that stuff, but they feel pressured by [the business side of it]. They feel aggravated by it. They don't enjoy their days. They work harder than they want to do. They don't have any time to do the things they are interested in doing. And they feel kind of like indentured servants in many cases. I think a lot of people feel like an indentured servant.

Betsey on the other hand, has a strongly-held personal perspective that a significant business title indicates a person who generates a significant personal impact in the world ("When you say you're a senior manager in a corporation people think, 'Wow, that's like a big deal.' "). As such, she often feels compelled to characterize her nonprofit identity by referencing her corporate past, and at the same time, making it very clear that she left the business world for something she values deeply.

> *Betsey*: I feel it's important for [people] to understand that my background is actually corporate, because I want them to understand that I make decisions in more of the businesslike corporate way. Or just to have them understand I'm an economics person; I'm not a social worker. People are always asking me if I'm a social worker, and I'm not. If I say I used to be a corporate consultant [and now a nonprofit executive], it says that this was really important to me; I've made a commitment and I've changed my life to do this particular job. I think that's a very attractive thing.

Paul is less concerned now about pejorative characteristics people ascribe to those who work in the nonprofit sector:

> *Paul*: Maybe it's just a symptom of my own self-delusion, or maybe it's a symptom of my advanced years [62 years old at the time], but I don't worry about [what people think about me] anymore. I don't feel like a phony. I'm highly aware that there are things that I would know if I'd been doing this work for 30 years that I don't know. That's definitely true.

As for the title and position, Paul feels that being the Executive Director of the county environmental organization gives him a certain stature in the community.

> *Paul*: [This] is an important organization in the county. Some people love us; some people hate us; many people don't still know who we are. But they know the name. So I have a certain entrée with political leaders, with business leaders. People are interested to meet me just because, and that's fun. A large part of this job is kind of outreach, and PR, and I actually happen to like that very much.

James also believes that being president of the leading community fundraising organization he holds a certain *cachet*, as manifested by the esteem he receives within the community's civic and corporate infrastructure. He did not receive this level of respect in his former life as the Advertising Director of the local newspaper - - admittedly a position not as high in the corporate hierarchy as, say, the publisher (i.e., owner), or even the editor of the newspaper. Nevertheless, he recognizes he still does not hold top position of the social-civic pecking order.

> *James*: This position [as president of the community fundraising organization], just because it has more of a community presence, I think is a little bit higher up on the food chain than [my position] as that [of a newspaper] ad director. But you are still not bank president. You are still not a corporate CEO. You are still not the Chancellor of the University. [Those positions] are still, I think, on a higher plane.

Lessons learned: A corporate eye on the nonprofit prize!

I asked Donald to share with me how his personal identity has been shaped as a function of his professional immersion in both the corporate and nonprofit discourses, and what qualities and characteristics contributed by the two sectors have made him who he is in his career right now. His response was framed as a personal learning experience about organizational issues; that is, his current perspective on management has been shaped from having experienced both the nonprofit and the for-profit frames of organizational reference. He described four different lessons he had learned.

1. Blend long-term mission with short-term performance results

In the for-profit world, professional success required Donald to achieve goals in the relative short-term: getting things done and producing results *now*. This message taught him the

value of being disciplined to focus on tasks at hand. His nonprofit experience provided him with a more relaxed view of near-term organizational targets, as measured against the longer-term fulfillment of a wide-ranging mission whose achievement might be generations away (e.g. ending world hunger). Donald now sees the importance of blending near-term organizational performance objectives (something he learned during his for-profit career), with a longer-term focus on a transcendent mission of service (what he has learned since being in the nonprofit world). He now sees how both viewpoints work together:

> *Donald*: … I see the match [between] for-profit being able to organize and mobilize, and the nonprofit being able to think more in the long term. And what we need is a meeting of both down the road. And maybe that's what formed me. I really think of what can we can get done, but in the long term. My for-profit training has given me the perspective of growing in increments, and growing with the knowledge of how do you build upon something.… [My nonprofit experience tells me] it's sort of like that growth doesn't have to have an endpoint to it.

2. Scale up by making the same difference "here" as done "there"

The for-profit world taught Donald that organizational growth was a paramount objective, and that proprietary information and products were essential ingredients for beating out the competition. He sees that such an orientation is not likely to work in the nonprofit context where organizational capacity is typically derived from limited resources that are predominantly local in nature, and where the best growth strategy requires the sharing of information and programmatic approaches across multiple organizations in multiple locations. Strategic growth in the nonprofit world suggests the value of replication (if not duplication) "here" of successful effective programs done "elsewhere". The replication of quality work undertaken by many organizations over multiple settings is how the nonprofit world often scales-up its impact to address a single widely held service mission. This approach is directly contrary to what Donald learned in his for-profit life, where "You're always looking for things that no one else can copy."

3. Focus on the mission; do one thing well.

Donald's experience in the banking world taught him to seek out new and different opportunities for the parent company, whatever the focus of the new business might be. In the nonprofit world, he has learned that effective nonprofit organizations do not stray far from their primary mission of service.

> *Donald:* Expansion and dominance is not something that's going to work [in the nonprofit sector]. [In the nonprofit world,] you've got to be smarter. There's got to be a smarter use of your resources to have the impact that you're looking for.

4. New-era sustainability .

Donald has been a part of the nonprofit sector long enough (21 years) to have witnessed close scrutiny by government regulators and private charitable funding sources who expect public accountability in exchange for their nonprofit status. He has also seen that in any given locale, many nonprofit agencies organizations may be providing similar services, and competing amongst one another for ever more limited public and private financial resources. In an earlier era, personal benefaction was sufficient to sustain many nonprofits. Back in the day, organizational strength was vested in the donor, not in the organization's core strategic approach and organizational integrity. In such a setting, efforts to sustain organizations were dependent on patronage relationships:

> *Donald*: In the old days it was like your grandmother worked on the board, and the old model of the nonprofit was fundamentally set on someone who is there to do good, who already has their other income, and it is more of a feel-good thing. [In those days you would get grants] for three years and then they are gone. You have to come back and ask again… You keep coming back to father to ask for more porridge. That gives father a lot of control.

Donald believes that today's best nonprofits will blend of the rational thinking of the for-profit world to produce short-term impact, with the visionary mission-context of service of the nonprofit mindset to improve quality of life for everyone.

> *Donald:* That's where the [nonprofit] world is heading. I see it in the funders I talked to; I see it in the nonprofit organizations I talk to. I see it in the state legislatures that I talk to. It's no longer your grandmother's nonprofit. If you're going to be a nonprofit you got to be doing it for rational quantifiable impact that benefits society. And that requires

numbers, planning, strategies, and measurement. Everything to the for-profit sector does, but looking at it on a long term scale. Because that's what the for-profit sector does not do. It does not look at the long-term.

Thoughts on returning to the business world

Betsey described to me the criteria she would use to make a determination of whether she would work in the nonprofit or for-profit worlds in a future career move. She was insistent that the real issue was not whether she would work in a for-profit company versus a nonprofit organization *per se* , but rather, given a particular humanitarian mission (e.g. curing cancer) where both for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations are working, which of the sectors would she choose?

Betsey said that if she were to work in field where both sectors operated, she feels that her given skills and talents (i.e. her interest in technology, her analytical problem-solving orientation; her fast and efficient working style; and her inclination to develop collaborative networks) would apply just as well across both sectors. In choosing between the two sectors the two sectors, she would consider other tradeoffs. On the for-profit upside of the equation, she assumes that a for-profit company would be better-resourced, and that she would have a staff budgeted and assigned to work with her. On the for-profit downside, she envisions that scheduling her life around work (i.e. work life balance) would be difficult. On the other hand, in the nonprofit world she imagines that she could probably find a well-resourced organization or foundation to work in, that would at the same time provide a good work life balance (in the manner of the relaxed nonprofit working style), while still being intellectually challenging. Betsey concluded her analysis this way:

> *Betsey:* I think the only thing that would really, really make it a slam-dunk that I would go into the for-profit, would be that for some reason, I really needed to make a lot of money.

As soon as she made this comment, Betsey recognized that she could not imagine why she would need to make a lot of money.

> *Betsey*: I have a certain amount of money and I'm okay with it… If I'm going to get up every day and run around like a crazy person, I want to do something that feels really good. And that usually leads me eventually to say, "I want to do this for a nonprofit." The reward is going to be that I'm really doing something for the greater good. I just think that the benefits of working on a mission, something for the greater good, is just more interesting and rewarding.

Advice to those considering the shift

I asked each of the participants to offer up specific advice, based on their direct personal experience, to others who might be considering a shift from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector. Betsey suggested that people looking for work in the for-profit sector typically consider their skills as the first basis for their career path in the business world. Career shifters to the nonprofit service sector, however, might be better off first identifying the specific mission-context to which they are drawn (e.g., homelessness; drug abuse; the arts, etc.), and then find ways to manifest their skills and interests within those particular organizations that operate within the given mission-context. Betsey points out that the nonprofit world actually offers a career context that is both skills-based and mission-driven.

> *Betsey*: If you really care passionately about a mission (say, homelessness), there are any number of ways that organizations are fulfilling that mission. So you could seek a great organization that helps homeless people, and they may be doing direct service; whereas, another organization may be doing just advocacy. And though they are two totally things, you have to say to yourself, "Where do I see myself [working within this particular mission–context]? I really want to get involved in this cause helping the homeless, but am I the kind of person that wants to be doing advocacy [or] do I want to get my hands dirty and be an operations person?" It's really important to tease out [that tradeoff], especially if you're coming from [the for-profit world]. [Remember,] you [probably] don't have a great network [in the nonprofit world], and [most likely] you don't really know what different organizations truly do. You might end up picking an organization that has a great mission, and they do great work, it's just not work that you're well-suited to.

Donald advises business people to be humble when they enter the nonprofit world and remember "Don't think you know everything, just because you came from the big corporate world." He suggests "use your ears" as any consultant might when they are identifying client needs. Each nonprofit is different, and each nonprofit has areas where it needs improvement.

Organizational models that work in the for-profit world for a given situations might not work so well in similar situations in the nonprofit organizational setting.

> *Donald*: You are not a silver bullet. You are an asset that can support the work of a nonprofit organization, but you have to find out how you can best use your skill set.

Recalling his own early bull-in-the-china-closet experience of storming into the nonprofit world with a set of business strategies that lost him his job, Donald offers this further caution:

> *Donald*: Many nonprofits are very skeptical of people coming from the corporate sector. We have to educate them on that. When people show me their resumes of what they've done [and] in the back in small type [it shows they have had] volunteer experience, I [suggest that they] throw it up in the front [of the resume] so the nonprofit employer will see that they have worked for [a nonprofit organization] for free. Because that shows who you are; that shows your worldview. And they will say, "Okay, this person gets it. Let me see what skills they have had in the corporate world that can transfer." You are moving into a different world, and you have to show that.

Valerie framed the same issue in a different way:

> *Valerie*: Start to learn how to talk a different language. And be prepared to be amongst people who don't understand the business landscape that you came from. And that doesn't mean that the experience that you bring with you is not valuable. It is invaluable. But one shouldn't be surprised when really smart experienced people [from the nonprofit world] are just not getting the business side of things at all.

How to handle such a situation? Valerie says, "Patience first, patience second, and patience third. Being patient and being willing to educate." Initially you might need to let go of some fundamental things from the business world that you know work but aren't being accepted.

> *Valerie*: But it's something that you can introduce slowly as you get people to understand your perspective and certainly you're going to change your own perspective. When it comes to education and getting people to understand concepts, it's been one of my strengths.

Valerie also points out the importance of collaborative decision-making in the nonprofit world; for example, the need to work with a voluntary board of directors who may be comprised of a talented group of individuals, some of whom have skills that don't even apply to the organization and some of whom may not fully grasp the mission of the organization. In any

event, collaborative deliberations and decisions via committee are fundamental structural realities of board operations. Such an approach might not come easily to some business people:

> *Valerie*: Often [Board] decisions are made by committee. [You might be] coming from a former life where something crossed your desk and you were the one who evaluated it, and put your finger on it, and sent it on its way. Now suddenly you're having to go, "Oh, my heavens. I need to run this by committee first." [she laughs]. That could be frustration.

Paul correlates the collaborative interactions in the nonprofit world with the concept of *working style*, which in turn is related to *personality*. In his interviews, he described a colleague in the legal profession ("an excellent lawyer") whose entire career had been spent working independently. Paul imagines that such a person would have a very difficult time working in the nonprofit institutional context.

> *Paul*: [Such a person] would have to give up that piece of resistance [to working in an organization] which is not necessarily a simple act of rational decision-making to make one morning over a cup of coffee. I have to believe there are causes or groups of people working on issues that [such a person] believes are important, that could use a person of his skills. But to be able to do it from a position within an organization, I don't think in this case it's really an option to say, "Just get over it, and go join a nonprofit organization."

Paul also raised the issue of *lifestyle* as a serious consideration for anyone making a career shift from the business world to the nonprofit service sector. He was fortunate to be seeking a simpler life when the position opened up at the nonprofit land conservancy he now directs. But some people can't afford a simpler lifestyle, or at least *think* they can't afford to live on "less money." For most, however, the lifestyle issue is not an objective question of true survival (i.e. they falsely believe that they need to earn a large salary simply in order afford the basics). Rather, the seemingly impossible trade-off of less income and fewer/smaller expenses is a subjective consideration, or "a mentality" as Paul calls it:

> *Paul*: I think a lot of people literally feel like indentured servants. Because they [feel like they] *have to* have saved up enough to send their kids to [a fancy college] without getting any financial aid, and they *have to* pay for private school. They *have to*, *have to*, *have to* do all this stuff which is incredibly expensive. It's kind of crazy that you *have to* have all this stuff.

Paul thinks of "lifestyle" as a belief system that is hard to break/change. He feels lucky that he himself did not have to deal with this difficult dilemma; that it was his intention to leave the law practice, and that he was blessed to secure a career position that allowed him to live the life that he wanted.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented (as I heard them), the stories of five individuals who shifted their careers from the business world to the nonprofit service sector. From their own words spoken during in-depth interviews conducted with each of them, I learned about their backgrounds, and the sequence of events they went through as they made their career transition, starting with their life in the business world prior to thinking about the shift, through the time when problems started arising in their business life that caused them to consider making a change. I noticed how the participants began to transform their orientation to work and career, shifting from a working context where *survival of the business enterprise* was paramount, to a new consideration where *service to people* and *quality of life of place* became more meaningful and purposeful motivations for work and career. They shared with me what I viewed as worries and concerns about making enough money in the nonprofit sector, and about finding work in nonprofit organizations.

I followed the participants' story lines after they crossed the threshold into the nonprofit sector, where I felt that sometimes -- but not always – they had found consternating differences from what they would have expected in their prior business life. I recorded their early experiences on the job in the nonprofit world, and heard them describe some apparent frustrations when familiar principles and strategies they brought with them from the business world were resisted, if not rejected, in the nonprofit sector.

Lastly I discerned what I have called the *nonprofit mindset:* a subjective identity (both internal/self-perceived and external/public) regarding work and career based on their "new"

experiences in the nonprofit workplace. Based on this mindset, they shared with me what they learned and advice they would give others who might be considering a similar work and career shift.

In the next chapter, I continue to probe the interview data, now focusing my attention on the relationship of this data to the research questions and theoretical frameworks that are fundamental to this study. In doing so, I will share with you the way in which the discourse of the business world that the participants brought to their nonprofit life, actually seemed to transform into a new discourse based on a substantially different world view and perspective to work and career that may be discrete to the nonprofit world.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

Introduction: From "lifeworld existentials" to "discourse"

In Chapter 3, I described the *typology of lifeworld existentials* (van Manen, 1990, pp. 100-106) that proved to be valuable in organizing my inquiry during the interview process with research participants. I also found lifeworld existentials to be a plausible starting point to guide my initial analysis of the themes that emerged out of the interviews that I conducted with the research participants. To review, the four fundamental aspects of van Manen's typology:

> **Lived space (spatiality)**. One's objective experience of space is physical / mathematical, and one's subjective experience of space encompasses feelings about being in a certain physical or mental construct of an environment.
>
> **Lived body (corporeality).** The body houses all of one's senses to experience the landscapes (both physical and mentally constructed) that we live in.
>
> **Lived time (temporality).** Experience lives within the horizons of an ever-changing subjective interpretation of past, present, and future.
>
> **Lived other (relationality).** In the interpersonal social universe that we all share, our social experience is a lived relationship with other beings.

In my "listening," the research participants clearly manifested van Manen's typology in their storytelling. I felt that they differentiated between the environment of "enterprise" in their for-profit life and the environment of "community" in their nonprofit work (spatiality). They described in detail the negative impacts created by work-life imbalances and a variety of related stress factors on their personal well-being (corporeality). Stage of life, time on the job, family life cycle events, and career path timelines were frequently mentioned as critical time frames of reference for their experience (temporality). Social networks and interpersonal relationships played a key role as the research participants moved from the business world to the nonprofit service sector (relationality).

As I probed and plumbed the data further, the thematic analysis quickly extended beyond lifeworld existentials. As can be seen in Chapter 4, I began to realize that the objective transition the research participants made to a new job was accompanied by a set of wide-ranging subjective experiences about work, career, and organizational life, based on the *differences* they found between the for-profit business world and the nonprofit service sector. As such, I was compelled to delve more deeply into the data, and apply the data more explicitly to practical matters beyond the four elements of van Manen's lifeworld existential typology. In particular, I began to see that, when examined closely, the narrative stories (as manifested in the *vignettes of experience)* point to a shift that occurred in the worldview or perspective of the research participants that I characterize in Chapter 4 as a discrete *nonprofit discourse.* I explain this shift in discourse as a function of two theoretical strands -- transformative learning and subjective career identity -- placed in a changing organizational context (from the for-profit to the nonprofit). The balance of this Chapter 5 is an extensive discussion of this important issue that has significant implications for policy, practice, and research as reviewed in Chapter 6.

Transforming the discourse of work life and career

In the previous chapter, I noted Donald's difficulty in finding a way to communicate about business principles in his first nonprofit job. What was it that really went wrong, there? Today, Donald says that he learned a lesson from that early work experience. He now knows that he didn't really "get it." He was not dealing with the nonprofit organization on its own terms ("I was a corporate guy using corporate language"). He did not relate to the people in his new environment from a mission-oriented point of view, but rather, from an organizational perspective that the banking industry – and the world in general -- had conditioned him to live by.

In this example, I believe that Donald faced a double-edged conundrum that others in his shoes might very well also experience. On one hand, he did not have available the fundamental language or terminology that would make his case in a compelling way for the nonprofit

organization. Moreover, his business-world conditioning masked his very ability even to see that his language was not connecting; that is, he was not even aware that the nonprofit organization's leadership was willing to forego organizational efficiencies and operational effectiveness for the sake of its mission of service. In such a state, Donald could only react to the situation in the ways he described: feeling diminished, rejected, offended and angry. In hindsight, Donald sees that the organization was not actually rejecting *per se* his suggestions of greater efficiency; rather, they just could not fathom what Donald was expressing in the context of the language he was using, and they could not be compelled by an attitude on his part that they construed as arrogant, self-important, insensitive and cavalier.

Donald's case hints at the subjective importance of *organizational discourse and communication* (see Ashcroft 2006, pp10-11) for people who shift their work and career from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector. The circumstances he faced were not unfamiliar to him; he simply needed to offer a more convincing argument to his superiors. But his unfamiliarity with the *discourse of the nonprofit world* – his lack of a *nonprofit mindset* -- caused him to be not only unconvincing, but more so, dysfunctional in the eyes of those around him. His subjective response of anger and rejection was not a functional solution. Unable to respond functionally, Donald ultimately found himself unable to continue in that position.

In this chapter, I use the data from interviews with the research participants to explore more deeply how several situations and circumstances in the nonprofit service sector that at first glance are seemingly similar to those in the for-profit business world, actually take on a different quality in the nonprofit setting. The chapter begins with a general examination of how the experience of the research participants reflects a special and discrete nonprofit experience -- that is, not simply another version of the *corporate experience*. To me, this experience is rooted in an *organizational mission-context* that the research participants found alluring and attractive as they explored the possibilities of making a shift from the for-profit commercial world, and more personally rewarding and fulfilling once they completed the shift to the nonprofit service sector.

The chapter concludes with a series of 11 “vignettes of experience” -- short scenarios taken from interviews with the research participants that demonstrate how certain topics and themes that are present in both the business world in the nonprofit sector can be construed in significantly different ways. The following topics and terms are covered by the vignettes:

1. "Getting the job done”
2. "Maximizing human talent "
3. "Making money work "
4. "Environmental drivers”
5. “Making the target"
6. “Tracking performance"
7. "Having a job"
8. "Being ‘nice’”
9. “Making tough decisions"
10. ‘Purposeful relationships and networking"
11. “Inevitability of stress”

While each of these terms applies both to businesses and nonprofit organizations, the words of the participants themselves show that there exists a context in the nonprofit sector that I call *the nonprofit discourse* that drives a special set of behaviors, responses, and decision criteria that is significantly different than what is expected in the for-profit world in connection with the very same topics. As the participants began to address jarring differences in their response to circumstances in their new life as nonprofit workers, the discourse of their work life and career transformed in order to be more functional in the nonprofit world. In essence, the participants each shaped a new system of representation to address and deal with circumstances and situations that looked the same, but were not. To accommodate the differences they encountered, each created a new and, in some cases, dramatically different organizational world-view and perspective on work and career that has allowed them to function effectively and successfully in the nonprofit sector.

Before continuing on, I would like to return to the example that started this section, and note Donald's current positive thinking about organizational efficiency in the nonprofit world, especially in light of his negative early-life work experience. He feels that over the past 20 years, the nonprofit sector has come a long way with respect to an acceptance and implementation of good organizational practice (as manifested in corporate culture), and that the language of traditional corporate organizational theory, has evolved to better suit the mission-orientation of nonprofit organizations.

> *Donald*: If I walked into a nonprofit now -- your average nonprofit – and said we have to look at "return on investment" (what is now called "results-based accountability"), it would be warmly received… or at least, it would be received.

What's so different about making a difference

I start this analysis with an example that may help show how a given circumstance or situation common to both nonprofit organizations and business enterprises can have a different context or discourse in each of the sectors. Let's take an example from my interview with James:

> *James*: I have 27 bosses [in my board of directors]. If you question authority, you're going to have a hard time [he laughs], because you get different angles from different people. I think you have to be flexible. That's very different for me being able to sit down with the owner of the business, who is my direct boss, and have a one-to-one conversation. And now, depending on the circumstance of the situation, I may have to talk to multiple, different people.

John experiences the nonprofit organization as a multi-headed creature. To accommodate this structural circumstance, he notes that *sources of authority* in the nonprofit world can be dispersed and widely distributed, resulting not only in multiple decision inputs and decision-making channels, but as well, in a collaborative and inclusive decision-style. Yet, in terms of structure and decision-making, we cannot say that collaboration, inclusion, and broadly distributed decision-making style are unique and discrete characteristics of the nonprofit organizational environment. Indeed, although some may contrast the commercial world as being more hierarchical and authoritative than the nonprofit sector, we could easily find many for-profit

enterprises that are inclusive, collaborative, and have broadly distributed (and at times loosely coupled) authority structures.

So it is not the objective realities of "structure" or "decision-making patterns" that distinguish the qualities that James ascribes to his 27 "bosses" in his nonprofit organization. Perhaps a more subtle distinction is embedded in a more subjective set of issues. That is, if we examine the *qualitative* aspect of authority structures in nonprofit organizations -- how we *feel* about them -- we might see that the mission-orientation of the nonprofit workplace creates in the individuals associated with it, a fundamental sense of purposefulness and meaning-making that does not exist as a core orientation in the corporate sector. The mission of the nonprofit becomes a motivational source of engagement in the enterprise rather than the enterprise itself being the source of engagement. Perhaps that is why, when people joke about the Board of Directors or staff members of a nonprofit feeling like "they own the place," instead of thinking of them as control freaks (as we might if they were obstreperous corporate shareholders), we might rather notice that *owning the place* in the nonprofit context is actually a euphemism for a deeply-held relationship to the mission of the organization that leads people to believe that they also hold a just as deeply-held relationship to the organizational structure through which that mission is being carried out. It is not an objective, quantifiable relationship to the organization; it is a subjective (perhaps even deeply subjective) and qualitative relationship. At the extreme, the relationship of staff and board members to the organizational structure of the not-for-profit organization might be a source of personal meaning-making that cannot easily be relinquished, and as a consequence, we ascribe a negative sensibility to their seemingly overbearing involvement.

This subjective orientation in the nonprofit service sector applies especially in the realm of personal satisfaction in the context of work and career. According to Betsey, people in the corporate world might find self-satisfaction when they manifest their skills to produce some beneficial result in the marketplace ("Some of my [corporate] clients were working on cures for cancer"), but the specific results are still focused on the company's immediate well-being. In the

nonprofit world, that sense of self satisfaction is magnified by the larger mission of the organization;

> *Betsey* : I'm taking all of my skills and I'm really spinning it into gold. What I'm doing is really just phenomenal because I am not only helping meet really desperate needs, but I'm also doing something that's natural to me; these are my natural skills. Like living up to my potential.

For Donald, a nonprofit career offers spiritual satisfaction and fulfillment that transcend the need for great financial fortune:

> *Donald*: The nonprofit sector is very spiritual to me. It's very much in essence, a way of doing good… [Since I've been working in nonprofit fields], all the work I've been doing has never been work; like *I'm going, not to work, but to fun.* I'm not making beaucoup bucks, but you know, I'm making a good living, and I'm going to be able to get my kids off to college, and stuff like that. I'm doing what I love.

It is this *subjective nonprofit experience* that I found in the language and expression of the participants during their interviews as they described certain aspects of their work life in the nonprofit sector as being somehow special or different qualitatively from their experience of similar objective circumstances that they had encountered in their prior business-world life. Later in this chapter I review several of these circumstances.

"Nonprofit" as a discrete practice

During one of my interviews with Betsey, she made an oblique reference to the way in which titles of job positions in nonprofit organizations hold a different meaning and impact than they do in the for-profit world. Earlier during that same interview, Betsey spoke at length about how she observed that nonprofits typically do not have the resources to create an internal chain of staff leadership succession, which results in few chief executives being hired from within the staff ranks of their own nonprofit organizations. Moreover, she has noticed that across nonprofit fields, chief executives tend to follow the news of appointments of other CEOs within the nonprofit community more closely than corporate chief executives follow similar personnel changes within their respective business industries.

These passing comments redirected our conversation to the notion of the world of nonprofit managers and administrators as being akin to a professional guild of practitioners, where individuals experience themselves as having a common practice focus, which in the case of the nonprofit professions is improving the quality of life of people and the places where they live, work, learn, play, visit, and stay well. This, as opposed to corporate executives whose primary focus is on improving the well-being of a given enterprise, and who therefore do not find themselves connecting with industry peers in quite the same "practitioner" way.

My conversation with Betsey suggests an issue that is pertinent to this study; namely, that the mission-orientation of nonprofit organizations might present a social environment in the nonprofit work setting that evokes a common *practitioner mindset* among those who are in such an environment, that is separate and discrete from the mindset generated by the social environment of the corporate enterprise. It would appear from the data in this study that the primary distinction between the two environments is that on the one hand, the focus of the practice in the nonprofit sector is *externally focused* on the well-being of society at large (making a difference in the world), whereas the focus of the practice in the commercial world is *internally focused* on the enterprise itself (assuring the company's bottom-line).

As with any community of practice, nonprofit organizations have their own set of practice characteristics. For example, it should not surprise us that someone coming into the nonprofit sector from the for-profit world, no matter how experienced in matters of business, would likely be considered a "newbie"; marked, as Etienne Wenger would say, a "peripheral participant" (Wenger, et al, 2002). A particularly well-seasoned business person would probably come into the nonprofit world with a set of proven strategies to assimilate quickly, into the nonprofit organizational community of practice. Betsey, for example, used her extensive networking skills and talents to find the right people to hobnob with, and to move quickly from being an "apprentice," to becoming a well-respected core member of the nonprofit "guild."

Whatever the case, the data generated by this study suggests that the external mission-orientation that generically characterizes nonprofit organizations is a fundamental motivating force that leads workers in those organizations to consider themselves players in a common practice of service; and the motivation of "service" that characterizes such a practice can be said to be markedly different from what motivates for-profit business executives, whose practice focuses primarily on the well-being of the enterprise itself.

The allure of a mission-driven, make-a-difference work life

As much as I do not want this study to be a work of critical scholarship about the "corporate discourse," it is hard to deny the consistently positive comments that each of the participants made about their life in the nonprofit world, as compared to the pejorative comments they often made about their prior life in the business world. Some examples:

> *Betsey*: I think the work I do today [in the nonprofit world] is really important, and it wasn't so important before [when I was in the business world]. It was important, but in an economic sense, in that I made good money that allowed me to do certain things, and I was able to provide for a staff so that they had jobs and things like that. That is important work. But in the bigger scope of things, it just wasn't that important.
>
> *James*: The nice thing about this [nonprofit] business is that when you make a difference, you really do make a difference. So that part I like. So if somebody were to ask me, "What did you do today?" Well [he stretches it out: *wellllll…]* in a small way, I think I made the community a better place, or I made a difference within my community. I kind of like that. It's nicer than, "Gheez, well, we made quota [laughs]!"
>
> *Paul*: The whole injunction that nonprofit work should be devoted to public benefit and not to private gain or private inurement is pretty profound. It is something, frankly, I didn't understand nearly as well [when I was a board member of the organization] as I do now when I've had this job… It's kind of coming more clearly into focus… I was a lawyer on the board [but] I wasn't nearly as sensitive to some of the stuff as I am now.
>
> *Victoria*: As I was starting to think about what I wanted to do, and where I wanted to go with [a career move out of the business world], I started to realize [that] the important ingredient that was missing for me [in business] was a clearly defined mission that people adhered to... [People in businesses quite often do not understand the mission of the company they work for. But people who work in the nonprofit world, understand the mission of their organization] much much more so.

There definitely appears to be something more personally meaningful and fulfilling in doing the nonprofit service sector work to make the world a better place, than the work of the commercial world to make for more effective and successful enterprises. Moreover, the difference between the two worlds is manifested most clearly in activities that seem common to the two sectors and that look the same on the surface, but which are significantly different between the two sectors when examined more closely and subtly. For example, Paul compares the terms *fundraising* versus *marketing* when describing how the nonprofit environment shifts the discourse of an activity that looks in some respects very much the same across both sectors (in this case, securing revenue from outside sources). He points out that nonprofit fundraising and corporate business development have similar functional characteristics: identifying people who will be interested in your work/product/service; meeting with those people and engaging them in productive interactions; telling (pitching) them about your own work and hopefully exciting their interest; and giving them the opportunity to be part of your work (buy your product or service) through the exchange or transaction of some financial consideration. But Paul characterizes these functions in the nonprofit context as somehow being more "noble."

> *Paul*: It's evangelism; it's preaching the good word. It's telling the good news about the terrific work [my land conservancy organization] is doing and how much of an impact it can have on the county which they care about, and inviting them to be part of the work. It really isn't a whole lot different than trying to get a client in some respects [he laughs] except that the subject and the context is totally different. And I find that I enjoy it.

Paul acknowledges, "there can be a kind of nasty aspect to it, in either world, I suppose;" such as "the constant obsession for figuring out who has the fattest wallet in the room," and then trying to meet them; or giving preferential treatment or special service to big givers. Nonetheless, there is a fundamental difference that is relevant to this research:

> *Paul*: Certainly in a straightforward [business] corporation, there's no embarrassment about it: your job is to maximize the income of the shareholders, by and large. And in the nonprofit [organization], your job is to do some public good that's been defined by your corporate charter and your mission.

Making a difference vs. Making money

The apparent allure of working in the nonprofit sector to make a difference in the world received a lot of attention from the participants during their interviews. Donald says that he always wanted a career with work that would make a difference in people's lives', and that would be integral to his own life -- "not a job I punch a clock at." He describes his work and career in the nonprofit world as a creative metaphor:

> *Donald*: My work is my art; it is my art form. I like it to be functional art. I want it to be art that makes a difference that's functional. And that's what I found in the nonprofit sector that I could not find in the corporate sector.

Donald claims that this is the same worldview of work that he originally had when entered the corporate world early in his career. Even as a young professional banker, he loved marketing and thought of "banking as a way for people… to invest in their lives; to start businesses and that type of thing." If he were to return to the banking world, Donald says, "I would still be trying to get them to work on more small micro-finance loans, or something like that, which they are not going to do."

But "making a difference" seems to have a natural counterpoint when it comes to the issue of making money. Again and again during my interviews with her, Betsey noted that working in the nonprofit world has helped her overcome a fundamental and lingering taken-for-granted worldview that "I can't ever make enough money." She has transformed this negative cognition by considering the serious unmet needs in the world that nonprofits are serving:

> *Betsey* : In corporate, there is always "not enough money". When you're in the nonprofit world, you see there's not enough of a lot of much more important things. You can't get excited about making more money when there is a child who has to walk three hours to go to school. And the money we raise can get that child a bike. And then you think about how we should really be getting bikes for *all* of those kids so they can [all] bike to school. If you are part of that… if you're part of the organization where you said, 'I'm doing this because this kid who has no shoes, is biking to school now because of me,' I mean, that's fantastic.

After finally leaving her job as a management consultant, Betsey moved to the nonprofit sector, initially as a volunteer. She realized that she really didn't have to worry about money; she had a severance from the consulting firm, and her husband had a good job in the finance sector. Even as she became more engaged with one particular nonprofit organization, and began to consider the possibility of a seeking a paying job there, her issue about making money lingered:

> *Betsey*: I kept saying [to myself], "It would be great place to have a job, but they don't have any money, so I can't get a job from them." There's that stupid voice again.

Betsey regretted that she never even noticed the voice in her head that was telling her to stay on a job in which he was dissatisfied but where she was making lots of money, rather than encouraging her to leave for a potentially more satisfying position in the nonprofit world where she would surely earn less money.

Where do such deeply ingrained, taken-for-granted (i.e., not even noticed) worldviews come from? Betsey wished that she could have done an audit of whose voices these were and where they were coming from. In hindsight, she sees how significant her parents' admonitions were in this regard. Her mother had grown up in a low income family, and as a woman who was prevented from pursuing a career opportunities, conveyed to Betsey her greatest fears:

> *Betsey*: When I left my corporate position, my mother just thought, "Oh my God, why would you go into nonprofits when you can go out and make gobs and gobs of money somewhere. That's what you should really do."

Betsey remembers trying to push back against her parents, telling them again and again that she didn't need any more money. She had all the money she needed right now. She felt secure financially. She had enough money! Apparently such declarations didn't hold much sway with her mother, and the voices of her parents continued not only externally ("I was in my 30s, and my parents were telling me to get a real job."), but in her own mind as well, regardless of how she felt.

> *Betsey*: Is the only measure of my success that I have a job that pays lots of money? That's crazy. That's totally crazy. And that voice [of my parents]; yeah, for years they would say, "When are you going to get a real job?"

Vignettes of work life and career through a mission-driven lens

In the final section of this analysis, I present eleven "vignettes of experience" that exemplify a discrete and distinct *nonprofit discourse* that seemed to emerge when the research participants shifted their work and career from the business world to the nonprofit service sector. Each vignette explores a particular generic topic or term from the worlds of work, career and organizational development. I have selected these topics because (a) they were mentioned one or more times during the interviews, (b) they were salient to the participants in both their for-profit and non-profit work lives, and (c) the stories document how the meaning of these topics shifted as the participants themselves shifted their work and career to the nonprofit sector. Taken together, these vignettes point to the existence of a nonprofit discourse that is separate and different from a for-profit discourse in connection with work and career. (See table 5.1).

Several points should be noted regarding the following subsections. First, I call the narratives "vignettes" because they are snippets taken from the interviews rather than a complete and thorough discussion of each given topic. Such a "slice" of expression provides sufficient evidence to suggest that a given term or topic from the for-profit world is subject to potential transformation when applied to the nonprofit experience. Second, not every issue in the vignettes was raised by every participant. If a topic or term was salient to this study, or seemed to have a particularly profound impact on the individual, it is included here. Third, for some terms, the respective vignette reveals a dramatic and significant difference of experience across the two sectors, while for other terms, the difference is slight, subtle or nuanced. I have included such cases to show that a wide array of transformational experiences may be likely and perhaps could be uncovered through more in-depth research.

The purpose of this section is <u>not</u> to suggest that a dramatic transformation in discourse always occurs across the board, but rather that *enough of a difference* can be observed *across enough different topics and terms* to suggest that a transformation in discourse between the for-

profit world and nonprofit sector is underway or has been completed. In the conclusion to this chapter, I explore the importance of observing a shift of any kind or degree of transformation in discourse for the purposes of this study.

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Table 5.1
Summary of Vignettes: Transformed discourse across sectors (Continued on next page)

Vignette (Generic topic/theme/issue)	For-profit business sector (Enterprise-driven discourse)	Nonprofit service sector (Mission-driven discourse)
#1: Getting the job done	• Work skills and talents are applied to survival of the enterprise.	• Work skills and talents are applied to the mission of the organization.
#2: Maximizing Human Talent	• Human resource development is considered a primary investment for enterprise productivity. • Jobs/work focus on results that are explicitly task-specific. • Executive talent is developed from within the enterprise.	• Supporting the human resource development function is subordinate to accomplishing mission, notwithstanding the detriment to staff morale and diminished worker retention. • Thin organizational structures lead to overworked personnel with multiple job functions. • New executive leaders are found from outside of the organization.
#3: Making money work	• Investors are the primary source of non-earned financial revenue. • "Impact on investors" is a priority consideration in decisions of the enterprise. • Financial criteria in decision-making are "black-and-white."	• Donors/funders are the primary source of non-earned revenue. • For organizational decisions, "impact on donors/funders" is a secondary consideration to "impact on accomplishing the mission." • Financial criteria in decision-making are "fuzzy."
#4: Environmental Drivers	• Context of "rivalry" among enterprises in the marketplace • "Capture market share" • "Eliminate the competition"	• Context of mutual support among service-providers to accomplish the mission • "Serve the need regardless of who does what." • Collaboration among organizations with a common mission
#5: Making the target	• Results are measured quantitatively and objectively. • The motivation to achieve targets is rooted in the enterprise being a "winner." • The "target" ultimately primarily benefits enterprise.	• Results tend to be measured in qualitative and subjective terms. • The motivation to achieve targets is rooted in the difference being made in the external world. • The "target" ultimately benefits primarily the larger social good.

Table 5.1 (cont.)
Summary of Vignettes: Transformed discourse across sectors

Vignette (Generic topic/theme/issue)	For-profit business sector (Enterprise-driven discourse)	Nonprofit service sector (Mission-driven discourse)
#6: Tracking performance	• Performance tracking is based primarily on quantitative metrics (e.g. impact on enterprise bottom line).	• Performance tracking includes qualitative components (e.g. impacts of the mission on society).
#7: Having a "job"	• Objective circumstances (title, salary, position, etc.) are primary sources of satisfaction. • "Deliver" for the enterprise. • Dedication, loyalty and sense of belonging focus on connection to the enterprise.	• Subjective sensibilities are the source of satisfaction ("The difference I made today"). • "Deliver" for the community. • Dedication, loyalty and sense of belonging focus on connection to community.
#8: Being "nice"	• "Nice"/"not nice" is not an issue in the for-profit world. • "Get the job done for the enterprise even if you have to be ruthless to others."	• Nonprofit workers are considered to be "nice people" and expected to be "nice." • "Kindness to others" supersedes the needs of the organization.
#9: Making tough decisions	• Decision-making is dispassionate (focus on bottom-line results; survival of the company). • "Make tough decisions when they need to be made." • "Benefit to the enterprise" supersedes "feelings".	• Decision-making is emotional (focus on the mission). • "Put off tough decisions; avoid addressing root issues." • "Nice people don't disagree, or make decisions that might hurt others."
#10: Purposeful relationships and networking	• Build and nurture contact lists that are functional; job/career related; and focused on the needs of the enterprise.	• Build and nurture contact lists that are contextual; community-related; and focused on organizational mission and personal interests.
#11: Inevitability of Stress	• "Stress" results when personal values and needs are aggravated by demands of the enterprise. • Resilience to stress is derived from material benefits (e.g. good salary; easy job; work-life balance) • Resilience to stress drops as demands and expectations of the enterprise become less important than personal well-being.	• "Stress" results from uncertainty of enough resources to address the mission adequately. • Resilience to stress is derived from the subjective vision of a better society. • Resilience to stress drops as a survival mentality takes over (ongoing hand-to-mouth existence of the organization).

Vignette #1: Getting the job done

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• Work skills and talents are applied to survival of the enterprise.	• Work skills and talents are applied to the mission of the organization.

People use "skills" in their everyday work life. Skills are a cornerstone of a professional credential, and the skills development is a major track for one's work over the course of a lifetime. Paul notes that his legal training and practice gave him a wide range of skills and provided a strong foundation for working as the executive director of a local nonprofit land conservancy where his professional skill set is expected to be diverse and wide ranging:

> *Paul:* [In my current work at the land conservancy,] given any set of problems, whether it's an employment issue, an employee relations issue, transactional issue, program issue, a project… you know, often there are legal questions related to any one of those things, but there are many many other questions as well.
>
> [It was the same in my law practice, where,]…if the guy calls you up and says, "We've got this situation here," you're being asked for one thing; you're being asked for your legal advice, your legal analysis. [But other issues are also often at play:] Is this a good idea? Is it good for the organization? [What are] the public relations implications? .

Betsey finds that in the nonprofit sector, she calls on skills similar to those she needed in in the business world, but with a key a difference:

> *Betsey*: I have always taken great satisfaction in the skills that I've developed, the skills that I use. The biggest difference [from when I was in the for-profit world] is that at the end of the day, I'm using my super powers for good. I'm attached to a mission that is really compelling and I feel our world needs my organization. Our country needs my organization to do well, to help millions of kids. In the past [in the business world], my reward for having done a good job was the satisfaction of doing a good job and money. [In my current nonprofit job], if we do a really good job, we are going to make a major change in our country for an issue that is really important. That's a huge difference; it's really good.

Betsey noted that *skills development* is a strong focus in the for-profit world that begins in one's academic life as one trains to join the workforce. She believes that people are attracted to skills development programs that match their personal interest. In her case, she enjoyed analytical challenges that required working with numbers; as such, she focused her academic

work in problem-solving, math, and economics. Upon completing her education, she looked for jobs where she could apply those particular skills, and found herself in the business of international corporate consulting. In fact, Betsey believes that skills and career choice are intimately linked:

> Betsey: For a lot of people, [their work choice] is really skills-based. They're looking to develop those skills they can [then] apply someplace where they will be rewarded for having those skills. That's the path that led me to where I was [as an international business consultant], and it was perfect.

Betsey thinks that a skills orientation should not be the starting point for considering work in the nonprofit sector, because the mission-context creates a transcendent orientation that often supersedes skills development and mastery. As such, Betsey can't imagine that someone who has been working in the business world would simply say that they want to move to the nonprofit world because their business skills would be better suited in the nonprofit setting. Rather, she believes people will start with an attraction to a certain kind mission, and then explore how their skills can apply to organizations operating within that mission. This kind of context-based (i.e. <u>not</u> skills-based) career shift can be challenging:

> *Betsey*: People making a shift [to the nonprofit sector]… have to realize, that they may not find the exact type of job using their exact skills [they've used in the business world], but they're going to jump into just the context, and say, "I'm going to go solve homelessness." [They may] not even get into the right kind of organization, and that's where it may be daunting for people to say, "I've been doing this kind of work for 10 years, and I want to shift my industry, but I don't see *that* job in *this* [nonprofit] industry."

Victoria points out that in the for-profit world, regardless of the position, businesses generally seek to hire employees who have training and experience in specific skills needed to carry out a given job description. Worker productivity on behalf of the enterprise is the underlying motivation for hiring people trained in specific skill sets. However, from her experience in the nonprofit world, Victoria feels that organizational mission in the nonprofit sector tends to be a higher consideration than organizational efficiency, especially given that nonprofit organizations tend to be under-resourced, and their staff often undertrained in

specialized functions. As such, unlike their business counterparts, nonprofit workers are often expected to share the organizational work load across job areas for which they have may have little training. Moreover, in order to get a given job done, they often must find, and work in collaboration with other staff members who may be as equally untrained.

Notwithstanding the seriously reduced efficiencies that result, Victoria says it is clear to her that nonprofit management seems often willing to sacrifice worker productivity for the sake of the organization's mission. For their part, workers are willing to operate in such an environment because of their transcendent deeply-held personal interest in the mission of the organization. Victoria used the term "forgiveness factor" to describe how nonprofit organizations have a greater desire to find workers who have the *passion* and the *heart* for the organization's mission, and forgo specialized skills required for particular work tasks. Nonprofit managers rationalize hiring less-skilled workers with the view that, "They'll learn it. You can teach a skill set. It's much harder to teach passion and concern."

The tenuous relationship of skills and specific work activities in the nonprofit sector is most clearly manifested in a particular characteristic of nonprofit life that most of the participants mentioned; namely, that working in the mission-driven nonprofit world requires one to shift the perspective that a person should work only on activities for which they have been hired, or which are limited by a bounded job description. Said another way, people in the nonprofit world are expected to do things in their work that would otherwise make no sense for a worker in the for-profit world (i.e. tasks that would never be considered acceptable). For example, as a high-priced management consultant, Betsey would laugh if she were to be asked by a corporate client to undertake a menial administrative task; yet as a nonprofit chief executive she is consistently expected to answer the phones, do filing, copying, etc. -- something she does perhaps begrudgingly, but nonetheless willingly. It appears that the mission-driven context of the nonprofit sector creates a different kind of energy, and personal resilience that enables a person to do things at work that gets the job done in a way that would otherwise be inappropriate to ask of

someone in the for-profit world, even if such tasks were necessary to achieve some basic organizational objective (e.g. answering the phone). In the for-profit world, it is not uncommon to hear someone say, *That's not my job. People at my level shouldn't be doing those kinds of things*.

From a skills-based point of view, the converse is also true in the nonprofit sector. That is, people from the business world might wonder whether they are even qualified to be in the nonprofit world because of the kinds of things they might be asked to do, that they never have been asked to do in their prior business experience, not because they are unable to do them (for example, moving the chairs or emptying the wastebaskets to set up a meeting), but rather, because in the for-profit world, one's performance-behavior is based on skills and position, rather than being motivated by the transcendent passion of a mission-context that supersedes one's personal ego.

A mission driven organizational context might provide energy and resilience to overcome the frustration and tedium that often accompanies the performance of mundane tasks. However, even this kind of energy can wear thin, especially, as Betsey noted in her case, "When you realize that you're doing a lot of stuff that you really don't like, but God you love the mission." At its worst, according to Betsey, the resilience drops to the point where "mission be damned," you simply can't keep doing everything to keep the place going.

According to the research participants, the above consideration might not apply so much in two different situations. In the first case, certain job descriptions might be considered context independent. For example, someone managing a warehouse for a manufacturing company might find little difference in managing a warehouse for a museum store or food bank. That is, the nonprofit mission may not be a factor in performing the tasks of the job and the worker might not experience much of a difference in the application of skills between the two sectors. The research participants noted that this would be especially true for very large nonprofit organizations where the mission of service tends to be somewhat disassociated from the operational functions of the

organization itself. For such an operational position, the primary focus of the job is likely to be on the skills of efficient operations, rather than on fulfilling the mission of the organization, even if the operations are supporting the mission.

The second situation where the experience of applying one's skills across the two sectors might not be so different, is where the skills require highly specialized training, or licensure/certification of some kind, such as legal, and certain clinical professions including medicine, mental health, teaching, or social work. In this scenario, for example, a research chemist working for a pharmaceutical company might find little functional difference in lab protocols when working in the same capacity for a nonprofit entity. The organizational context would be different, perhaps; but not necessarily the specific performance of the work of the job.

Vignette #2: Maximizing human talent

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• Human resource development is considered a primary investment for enterprise productivity. • Jobs/work focus on results that are explicitly task -specific. • Executive talent is developed from within the enterprise.	• Supporting the human resource development function is subordinate to accomplishing mission, notwithstanding the detriment to staff morale and diminished worker retention. • Thin organizational structures lead to overworked personnel with multiple job functions. • New executive leaders are found from outside of the organization.

In the realm of human resources management, the participants noted that their experiences of several human resources topics were different across the two sectors.

Staff Training and Professional Development

Betsey noticed a significant difference between the ways that each of the sectors views professional development. In the for-profit world, significant organizational resources are invested in staff development, because, as she says, "they know they're going to make it back in profit… They're going to make that investment back pretty quickly." With a focus on the organization's well-being (e.g. the expense of replacing and train new company employees), for-profit managers calculate the benefit of investing in staff training in terms of increased revenue

generated from the sales of products and services, or reduced costs derived from greater efficiency and productivity through improved best practices. In either case, such benefits fall directly to the bottom line.

When she moved to a new nonprofit, Betsey found that she had inherited a nonprofit organization "that was already squeezing people. It was really hard." It appeared to Betsey that nonprofits take advantage of people's passion for the mission of the organization by not offering the upward organizational mobility that often results from company-sponsored professional training. Indeed, the rap on nonprofits -- especially smaller, more grassroots organizations -- is that they don't give good raises, do not provide health benefits, expect long hours of work for low pay, and provide inadequate resources in the work environment, etc.

Donald, on the other hand, suggests that the professional development conundrum in nonprofits is structural in nature:

> *Donald*: The nonprofit sector is very loosely coupled. It does not have a strong mechanism for distributing learning. When things are learned, they're not diffused.

As Betsey sees it, there is an inherent dysfunction and paradox within the nonprofit sector in connection with professional development. On one hand, nonprofits operate with missions of service to make the world a better place to live; while, on the other hand, the human values that are promoted in the missions may not manifest within the human resources functions of the organizations themselves. In the business world, the corporation is much more effective in extending professional development for its workers because it expects to get back what it puts in, and then some. Whereas in the nonprofit world, the organization tends to use the workers' passion for mission as a rationale for overworking, underpaying, and under-resourcing them. As such, the altruistic values of the nonprofit may not play out in the day-to-day realities of employee relations and professional development.

Interestingly, Betsey notes that nonprofit employees themselves have a dysfunctional expectation of not being treated well in the face of their passion for the organizational mission. In

this sense, the relationship between workers and employers in the nonprofit world mutually enables the dysfunction to persist:

> *Betsey*: I think it's quite obvious to everyone… They [the nonprofit organizations] say… "The price we pay [for lack of financial resources] is that we will work a little less efficiently, and we will suffer, but we are still going to be able to help all these different [constituents we serve]." It's a collusion; a collaborative agreement where the staff people say, "I understand that I've agreed to take less money than I probably am worth, and to work in this sort of rough environment, because I really care so much about the mission. Yeah, go ahead."

A vicious cycle emerges. There is a notion within the nonprofit sector that for-profit companies have "money to burn" on staff salaries. The nonprofit organization tells its workers that financial resources are insufficient to support them at "for-profit rates." This leads the nonprofit worker to expect to work for less money. For a corporate person (as Betsey once was), this argument is specious:

> *Betsey* : In my corporate experience, I never sat in a room with business people and talked about [how] we have so much money we don't know what to do with it. [My bosses] were always talking about how I need to cut the production cost of this particular item by X percent because I need to compete… I need to make do with more; I need to do more with less. They were constantly talking about it. In the for-profit sector, it was really about working smarter and more efficiently. In the nonprofit sector, it's like, I just accept that this is the way it is, that we're not going to nurture you and mentor you.

Staff leadership succession

Betsey found a corollary to professional training in the realm of staff leadership succession. It struck her as interesting that typically, announcements of newly appointed nonprofit executive directors will say what outside organization the new CEO has come from; it is rare to see an Executive Director promoted from within the organization's internal senior staff. To the contrary, her experience in the corporate world was that companies groom their executives to take over ("There's always talk about the next CEO, who's it going to be [from within]?") In business companies, the chief financial officer, chief operating officer, and other senior executive team members are often carefully positioned to be prospects for moving up into the top position.

Betsey observed that when nonprofits look for someone new to head of the organization, they are often looking to the outside. This suggested to her that the current structures of nonprofit organizations do not nurture, or grow the staff to assume leadership roles. Indeed, to the degree that nonprofits are unable to target resources to strengthen the internal organizational structure, that structure becomes very thin, and unable to nurture and grow successive staff leaders.

Underpaid and Overworked

One of the classic criticisms of nonprofit organizations is that staff members are paid less than their counterparts in the business world, and they have to work harder in their jobs relative to the lesser compensation they receive. Several of the research participants in this study spoke about their own experience or that of other colleagues who work for nonprofit organizations that could not afford to pay them an appropriate level of compensation for work-time they were spending on the job; or in some cases, people who took part-time jobs at nonprofit organizations, and ended up working full-time (or more) just the same.

> *Paul*: "There's this sort of mentality that you just don't get paid much, but you work all the time… That is certainly not an ethic at [my organization], at least not under my regime… But for all of that, there is a constant sense that I haven't finished my work, and that there's stuff I really need to do. And you know, that does weigh on me. I feel always a little behind.

Paul feels that in an ideal world, organizations such as his would have more staff people doing certain important work, and that in the absence of additional senior staff, the executive director ends up doing several jobs: fundraising, housekeeping, staff management, accounting and finance, etc. The result is that many senior executives in the nonprofit world end up with the backlog of important work they have not yet done; a condition that generates pressure and anxiety in their work life. Nonprofit executives in this position end up having to do a sort of management *triage*, where only the most urgent, serious and immediate demands are addressed, one, after the next, after the next, and so on. In such a context, the executives could indeed work more than full-time just to keep their head above water. Paul imagines that he is not alone:

> *Paul*: My guess is that that's a pretty darn common frustration among executive directors of nonprofits. It's "the buck stops here", and "the work's gonna get done", and at some point, somebody's staying late to do something.

When I asked Betsey if there was anything about her nonprofit work life that she had tolerated that she would have found intolerable otherwise in her prior business life, she expressed her concern that smaller grassroots nonprofit organizations -- just the kind of organizations she had been working for -- tend to be under-resourced:

> *Betsey*: One of my huge complaints [is that] as an Executive Director, as a CEO. I [am] not doing CEO work when I [have] to answer the phone, or figure out who is shoveling the sidewalk, or stupid things like that… dealing with sort of mundane things [when] I really want to be doing more of an executive type function. Part of it is that I've chosen small organizations.. . combined with… also being in the nonprofit sector.

Vignette #3: Making money work

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• Investors are the primary source of non-earned financial revenue. • "Impact on investors" is a priority consideration in decisions of the enterprise. • Financial criteria in decision-making are "black-and-white."	• Donors/funders are the primary source of non-earned revenue. • For organizational decisions, "impact on donors/funders" is a secondary consideration to "impact on accomplishing the mission." • Financial criteria in decision-making are "fuzzy."

As the CFO of a nonprofit Humane Society, Victoria had a very specific viewpoint about the nonprofit discourse regarding finances and "money." The topic first arose when I asked her whether or not, now that she is working in the nonprofit sector, she continues to insist on being called a "businesswoman" (a strongly held self-characterization of identity that she says was shaped by her career experience in the corporate world). She responded that it was still accurate. As a businesswoman, she said that she wants to bring fiscal discipline from the for-profit world into the nonprofit sector, implying that there is a difference between fiscal accountability between the two organizational environments. She noted that there is a remoteness, or disconnection that she often feels among people in the nonprofit world toward "money coming in."

> *Victoria*: It's a little bit of a "God will provide" attitude; it's "money happens." It is only in the past 10 years, or so it seems, that nonprofits have been more focused on revenue generation, giving them much more of an exposure into where and how money is made.

Victoria noted that this disconnect is most clearly manifested in how nonprofit organizations become "fuzzy" with regard to what she believes should be straightforward black-and-white financial decision-making. According to Victoria, the business way of thinking about money is that the organizational activity (i.e., expenses) will have to be cut back if revenue (earned or invested) shrinks. In the nonprofit world, her experience is that "there's only so much money you're going to be able to get from your donors," Victoria believes that financial decision choices *should* be clear for nonprofit organizations: "You either cut back on your expenses, or figure out how to generate more money."

So why is there a disconnect in the nonprofit sector between sources of money and the spending of money? And why is financial decision-making so "fuzzy" in nonprofit organizations? Victoria explains these differences as a function of the core orientation of the organization. The for-profit business experiences money coming from the pockets of *someone*, or from the organization's *margin.* These sources of revenue are fundamental to the organization's *raisons d'être* to inure benefit to the investor(s) by maintaining profitability of the enterprise's business activity.

In the nonprofit world, however, Victoria sees an underlying belief that the organization's relationship to its sources of income has no comparable direct link to anyone's "pockets," nor to organizational survival in the same way. Given its fundamental mission-context, a nonprofit organization's relationship to money is more akin to *stewardship* (*how* am I using the money) than to transactions (*how much* am I getting), which, while important, nonetheless, does not evoke the same kind of direct sense of "survival" that is found in business sources of revenue. To explain this phenomenon further, Victoria provided a one-paragraph business finance primer for us to consider:

> *Victoria:* In the for-profit world, I have a product or service. I need to figure out how to make it, how to market it, how to sell it, and then my dollars come in. In order to get off the ground, I need to have investors, and it's either going to be my own pocket, or somebody else's pocket, or a consortium of people. And in the nonprofit world [revenue is derived from…] a group of people, and often somebody who is a bit more philanthropic (who has deeper pockets and cares very passionately about the mission)… And in the meantime, the people providing the service (the employees) are not really concerning themselves with, "Oh, I have this product. I need to sell it, and when I'm selling it, I'm going to be making a margin on it, and if I don't make a margin on that, I don't have a job.

Victoria suggests that nonprofit managers are not receiving the kind of financial education and a sensibility for financial accountability they need to be fully engaged with the financial aspects of their organizations. She thinks that nonprofit boards exacerbate the problem by sheltering (albeit unintentionally) their senior staff from fiscal responsibility, even though financial problems, or worse, failure will inevitably fall on the shoulders of that very same senior staff. This comment reminded me of comments made by both James and Paul that the finances of the nonprofit organization were some of the most difficult aspects for them to understand and learn; that to some degree, it was easier to relinquish that responsibility to others for whom "that kind of thinking" was easier or more comfortable to grasp.

Victoria wonders if the problem lies, to some degree, in the academic credentialing of nonprofit managers who are typically either liberal arts majors, or trained explicitly in a particular nonprofit field. Academic programs that are training nonprofit managers for a particular discipline stay clear of "business education" so there is little academic exposure to business study as it might apply to a given nonprofit field. The difference seems clear to her:

> *Victoria*: I do think that in both settings, people fully understand, "No money, no mission." But in the for-profit world, I believe the majority of people understand that it is also [their personal] responsibility... to further the cause of profit. And in the nonprofit world, the money part is too often, "Somebody else's issue… problem… to deal with."

It appears that the business discourse is about surviving the organization more than it is fulfilling the mission, and in the non-.profit discourse, fulfilling the mission supersedes any priority to survive the organization.

Vignette #4: Environmental Drivers

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• Context of "rivalry" among enterprises in the marketplace • "Capture market share" • "Eliminate the competition"	• Context of mutual support among service-providers to accomplish the mission • "Serve the need regardless of who does what." • Collaboration among organizations with a common mission

Victoria raised an interesting point about "competition" and "market share" in a mission context. In her experience, business people understand that if their company is not providing an exemplary product or service, with special and distinguishing features, then some other enterprise might just step into the same marketplace and, using some type of competitive edge, attempt to win a share of the market being served by the original company. As well, business people are well aware that in certain product categories, more players in the same marketplace will actually expand the market for such products (for example, four gas stations on the same corner increases market demand at that intersection).

In the nonprofit world, while there may be a lot of competition for donor dollars, not much energy is spent on competing for market position in the realm of the organization's mission. That is, if there is a Humane Society operating successfully and effectively in a community, it is highly unlikely that another Humane Society would be formed whose purpose would be to funnel clients from the first organization. Victoria suggests this noncompetitive mindset in the nonprofit world is derived from the relationship that nonprofits tend to have with one another. Generally speaking, nonprofits appreciate the value of other nonprofit colleagues serving the same community, and little energy is spent between and among the nonprofits to steal clients from one another as a strategy to put the other(s) out of business.

> *Victoria*: In the nonprofit world, there is more respect for everybody… We all have missions to be valued, [even if] we might disagree with what their mission is. But barring that, children's aid, education, serving needy families, getting food to people, providing shelter for the homeless, providing space for unwanted animals, we would all agree, are good missions and we would all like for each other to survive. In the for-profit

world, the only reason I'm going to be concerned about whether another business survives or not, is if it is going to further my own business.

Vignette #5: Making the target

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• Results are measured quantitatively and objectively. • The motivation to achieve targets is rooted in the enterprise being a "winner." • The "target" ultimately primarily benefits enterprise.	• Results tend to be measured in qualitative and subjective terms. • The motivation to achieve targets is rooted in the difference being made in the external world. • The "target" ultimately benefits primarily the larger social good.

As he enters his fourth year on the job, James is beginning to feel the pressure of what he calls "the standard of performance", namely, the need to reach ever-increasing fund-raising goals, or, as he says in newspaper ad executive lingo: "chasing that number." Regardless of the organization's mission in the community, and all the good services that result from James' leadership of the community fundraising campaign, there is still a number attached to whether or not he is considered "successful" in his work and career. And James is finding the pressure mounting to make sure that number continues to grow as it has in his first three years on the job.

> *James:* To some degree, you become a victim of your own success. So as you continue to grow the number, people expect that that's going to be the regular result of your work. And you know, it may be. But it's not going to be without a lot of effort put out there to make it happen.

With his many years of experience facing similar pressure in the newspaper ad game, James could fall back into the same feelings of dissatisfaction and burnout that led him to leave the business world for the nonprofit sector. But he does not, because there <u>is</u> a difference that James has noticed in his experience of the pressure to reach a number in the nonprofit world. And that difference is rooted in the fundamental mission orientation of his organization to make a difference for the community in which it is located. This is quite different from the pressures he felt in the business world, where "bottom line results" were primarily for the benefit of the company. Here's how James characterizes the difference:

> *James*: The energy and effort you put into it as you are "chasing the number" [in community fundraising]… has real meaning to it, and real value into what happens with that number. And that is, that I know that we help support agencies, and the work that the agencies do impacts the lives of thousands…of people in our county. That piece to me, is like "Wow, I feel pretty good about being able to do that." It is not like opening the paper, and looking at an ad, and saying, "Hey, I designed that ad. What do ya think? Pretty cool, huh?"

Paul, as well, finds that he spends a lot of personal energy, focus, and worry on the ongoing financial needs of his organization, but it takes on a different quality than when he was a partner in a large law firm. In the nonprofit context, the annual budget is the "target". But there's something more than just the survival of the organization at stake in the way Paul looks at "making the nut this year." It is a rationale for thinking about expanding the resources dramatically in order to provide greater service:

> *Paul*: I ask myself when I walk out of here, "What am I going to have to show for it?" What I would really like to have to show for it? I'd love to have a $50 million endowment and project acquisition fund. I'd like to put us in a whole new stratosphere of being able to do projects. Because to really be able to do projects, [it is essential] to have that kind of assets… So, yeah, I guess I'm still thinking about money aren't I?

Vignette #6: Tracking Performance

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• Performance tracking is based primarily on quantitative metrics (e.g. impact on enterprise bottom line).	• Performance tracking includes qualitative components (e.g. impacts of the mission on society).

In the previous vignette (*Making the target*), Paul expressed the angst of having to keep the organization financially viable. During my interviews with Paul, he expressed further discomfort with one of the classic challenges facing senior executives of nonprofit organizations: keeping track of quantitative performance results.

> *Paul*: One of my least favorite terms is *metrics.* And everybody talks about that, not only in the corporate world, but in the nonprofit world… I always kind of bristle against it, even though I can't say that it's a terrible thing to try and articulate measures of success and all that. Intuitively, it rubs me the wrong [way] because I just think life is more complicated than that -- to talk about what is success and what is not success. . I also think that my deepest aspirations have to do with things that are probably most difficult

> to measure. [For example], one of the things we do [that] I think is most important, which we don't even talk about in our mission statement because it is way too out there, is building community -- bringing people together and kind of breaching walls that tend to divide different groups of people… So how do you measure stuff like that? You can't. So that may be partly a reaction to the profit world where metrics are really important to the managers. I guess I don't know how else to manage a big enterprise without saying, "Here's our objectives" and "Did we make our production quotas this quarter?" …That turned me off a lot.

Victoria says she works with metrics all the time in her nonprofit job, and to some degree much in the same way she did in the companies where she was a financial manager. Yet there is a difference as shown in the following extended interaction with me ("interviewer," whose questions are paraphrased):

> *Victoria*: [In my nonprofit life, I am] not walking into the office every morning and leaving at night… checking the bottom line… I'm not constantly having to reference metrics; I'm not constantly having to reference my profit and loss. Instead, the thing I'm focused on is truly what we did today. And it is… a very different focus. Certainly I'm having to pay attention to the bottom line. I need to make sure that we've got dollars. But the mission is primary, and it's different.
>
> Interviewer: *What is that difference?*
>
> *Victoria*: I'm not having to pay attention to margins. "Margin" is a word that has dropped out of my vocabulary; whereas, for 30 years, "margin" has been a word that I used every single day.
>
> Interviewer: *And if it's not margin (the difference between earnings and expenditures), then what is now motivating you in the background that is distinct and different?*
>
> *Victoria*: What's motivating [me] in the background… I can't say it any other way than, "Are we accomplishing our mission?"
>
> Interviewer*: But you are the director of finance, right?*
>
> *Victoria:* Yes, I'm the director of finance… , Certainly paying attention to the dollars, certainly knowing that donation dollars are coming in, that we are pricing our services correctly… All those issues are of concern. But at the very top of the list, "Is the mission being accomplished?" Rather than [in the for-profit world] at the top of the list being "If something happened… would the owner be whole if we had to dissolve." Because ultimately, in finance, [you need to be] whole. At the end of the day [the finance director asks]… "Can you meet your financial obligations?" Because if you're making widgets, there will always be somebody else to come in and make a widget for you. You know, [customers will] pick up the phone… and get a widget from somebody else. In our case

[at the Humane Society], people can't do that. We are meeting the needs of a very specific region, and a very specific population. So if we aren't here, it doesn't get done. And that's very clear.

Interviewer*: Can you hear the widget maker scratching her head and saying "How can these nonprofits operate the way Victoria thinks?"*

*Victoria: Y*es, and ultimately, what they actually do say is, "Oh my heavens, you are making a difference." And they say it with wonderment like, "Oh my heavens, you are making a difference." And then there's this kind of wistful pause.…

Interviewer: *What's going on that renders the "wistfulness?"*

Victoria: It's that piece of making a difference rather than going in day after day and saying, "Yahoo, I'm making another widget!" and "Yahoo, I figured out how to carve a 1/16 of a cent savings out of the next widget we make." Which, on an intellectual… and academic basis – – is, you know, that's interesting, but it doesn't feed the soul… And it may or may not feed the pocketbook.

Vignette #7: Having "a job"

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• Objective circumstances (title, salary, position, etc.) are primary sources of satisfaction. • "Deliver" for the enterprise. • Dedication, loyalty and sense of belonging focus on connection to the enterprise.	• Subjective sensibilities are the source of satisfaction ("The difference I made today"). • "Deliver" for the community. • Dedication, loyalty and sense of belonging focus on connection to community.

James says that the mission orientation of his work helps him to feel that he is in a good place about his career now; and being in a good place gives him a certain degree of resilience to withstand the stressful circumstances that show up from time to time in his daily work life; such as criticism from a disgruntled donor, being asked by a board member to do something he'd rather not do, or complaints from a recipient agency unhappy with its allocation. The pressures generated by these situations don't seem to force James to deviate from knowing that he's in a good spot professionally. Yet he admits it is a "still a job," and after a weekend away having fun with his family, he still has to go back to work on Monday morning. But there is a difference now in his nonprofit work life compared to his similar experiences in the business world:

> *James*: It is work, but it's fulfilling work that carries you through those… darker periods where you're like, 'Oh, God. I've got to go to work.' I have those occasionally, but not nearly [as much as I did in my former business life]. I mean, after years and years of the newspaper business, I mean man, it was tough going in there. I was toasted.

When I asked Betsey which she preferred to be considered, a corporate executive, or nonprofit executive she replied:

> *Betsey* : I probably would more likely be nonprofit, because I just think that the benefits of working on a mission -- something for the greater good -- is just more interesting and rewarding.

James shared the same kind of thinking:

> *James*: I enjoyed my newspaper career tremendously, but I reached a point where there are only so many ads you could sell in life, so I was searching for something that held a little bit more meaning, or dare I say, even little more value. Something that felt richer… It has just been a very… easy transition to move into this world where, at the end of the day, you're like, "Yeah. Alright. That was a day well spent." And you know, it just seems to hold more of a reward to it, I guess, than, you know, "We made our quota."

Betsey found that working toward a mission can be exhausting, and that work life can go out of balance and pose personal challenges in the nonprofit sector just as it does for many people who work in the for-profit world:

> *Betsey:* I view it almost as a double edged sword, ironically. When you get to certain milestones [of achievement] you feel really good, because you have made progress in something that you feel really passionate about. But the downside is that, because you really want to keep doing more, sometimes the mission just can become like a steamroller (as far as balancing [your life] and really not going crazy). It can wear you out, trying to devote so much energy and so much time to the mission that you care really passionately about. Sometimes, you really need to step back and say to yourself, "Chill! I don't need to work for 12 straight hours on this particular issue even though it does need to get done. I really need to step back." And it's harder to do that when you really care about the mission and what you're doing has tremendous meaning.

In the case of work life balance, here, too, Betsey notices that there is a fundamental difference between the nonprofit and for-profit worlds:

> *Betsey:* In the corporate world, there was always a lot of stress and pressure to deliver, but it was external pressure *per se* (deadlines, directives from superiors, or clients, fiscal year ending, filing dates, etc.). It was externally driven, especially in larger bureaucracies where you don't necessarily have a lot of control over your projects. Whereas [in the

nonprofit world] I feel the mission internally [from within myself] and I want to keep going, going, going, until I actually have to tell myself to step back.

In the end, the trade-off between "mission" and "organization" can lead to burnout in the nonprofit world, as Betsey found out in one of her early nonprofit work experiences:

> *Betsey*: I stayed with [that nonprofit organization] longer than I should have, because I was really connected with the mission, and that's where you start saying, "Am I committed to the mission of helping children, or [to the organization]?" And that's when it started to sort of come apart…
>
> I was just worn out. The commute was terrible. The work environment was kind of rough (you know, working in a warehouse), and I was just like, "Forget it." I had sort of peaked.

Vignette #8: Being "nice"

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• "Nice"/"not nice" is not an issue in the for-profit world. • "Get the job done for the enterprise even if you have to be ruthless to others."	• Nonprofit workers are considered to be "nice people" and expected to be "nice." • "Kindness to others" supersedes the needs of the organization.

One of the recurring characteristics of the nonprofit world cited by the research participants was the use of the term *nice* to characterize behaviors of people in the nonprofit world. The term was described with both positive and negative connotations. On one hand, "nice" has a positive inference, as in, *Those who work in the nonprofit world are <u>nice</u> people*.

This reminds me that when Betsey was told that her personality profile indicated that she was a service-oriented person, her response was, "I didn't really think of myself that way *per se*. You know, I think of myself as a ***nice person***, but…" This is the very impression that has struck James in his experience of the nonprofit sector. Compared to his experience in the for-profit business world ("There were some really nasty people you had to do business with."), James has found that people in the nonprofit world are just "a ***nicer grade*** of people." He described what he meant by this:

> *James*: [Nonprofit folks] are truly willing to reach out and to work with you. They are not aggressive [from] a competitive stand point. There's not that, "Well, *Gheez,* you

> know I need this from you so…" I don't get that sense at all. I just get that they are truly more caring, and like I said, it strikes me that they are just ***nice people***. They just have a ***nicer core***. I don't want to use the word innocent; that would be inaccurate. Pure. A little more in touch with their human side.

James thinks that the "nice behavior" that he finds in nonprofit organizations has a lot to do with the mission driven nature of nonprofit work. He pondered whether it was the nonprofit sector that shapes an authentic kind of niceness in people who work there, or if the personality of those drawn to the nonprofit sector is already "nice," and they bring that niceness to the nonprofit workplace. Whatever the case, James said that he had not come across many cutthroat people in his nonprofit work life, and that to find such a person in the nonprofit sector would seem odd.

Early in his professional life, Paul also seemed to hold the notion that people who work nonprofits are "nice," but in a somewhat pejorative sense:

> *Paul*: When I was going to law school, enjoying [the big city], and getting into the fast track East Coast professional world, I think on some level, I was running away from… cartoon images of failure that I always carry around in my mind. I said to myself, "I don't want to end up being a YMCA secretary in Minot, North Dakota." That's kind of how I figured what could've happened to me, because I'm a ***nice guy***. I could easily have gone to work at the Y… My parents…would have thought that that was a noble thing to do… There [is] at least some resonance, I suppose, for that whole world [with] what I'm into now [as a nonprofit executive].

Using a third connotation for "nice," Donald made a sarcastic reference to the reputation of nonprofits as being "nice" when he described how surprised he was at the vitriol generated by the early issues of magazine he published to help bring better management practices to the nonprofit sector.

> *Donald*: I got a piece of hate mail saying, "You know, you're destroying the nonprofits. You're evil." They didn't say that, but it was something [like that]. That was a strong response for someone, especially in the ***nice-nice nonprofit sector***, to be sending to somebody they don't know from Adam.

Vignette #9: Making tough decisions

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• Decision-making is dispassionate (focus on bottom-line results; survival of the company). • "Make tough decisions when they need to be made." • "Benefit to the enterprise" supersedes "feelings".	• Decision-making is emotional (focus on the mission). • "Put off tough decisions; avoid addressing root issues." • "Nice people don't disagree, or make decisions that might hurt others."

For whatever reasons, all organizations at some point along the way must confront the need to address difficult issues and make difficult decisions leading to potentially significant or dramatic changes in the organization's direction or strategic orientation. Betsey's experience in the for-profit world was that thorny organizational issues were addressed directly by company executives. Hard decisions were faced openly, in order to protect the organization from damaging results. As messy as a given situation might have been, decisions were made and executed assertively, even if the consequences were nasty:

> *Betsey*: …with the for-profit [company], people come in and want to make huge changes. Shut down divisions and so forth it. Like that. And they use all those battle terms, [such as], "It's a bloodbath" and all this other stuff.

In her nonprofit experience, Betsey found that she would often propose organizational changes and the response of people around her, at both the board and fellow staff level was often "passively resistant." By way of example, Betsey described how she would propose a new direction at a board meeting, and few people would question or make comments about the strategy she was proposing ("there would just be silence… I heard nothing…"). In a context of "agreement by silence", a decision in favor of the new strategy would then be made. Later on, when it came time to carry out the strategy, people would say to her, "Sure, sure." when agreeing to carry out tasks that she assigned to them. But when Betsey questioned why the requested tasks were not being done, people would say back to her, "Don't worry, I'll do that," and yet time would go by and still, they had not done anything.

To Betsey, it definitely appeared that such people had no intention of doing the job in the first place, but were obliged to be "nice" about it (see prior vignette). Yet, after the fact, when things didn't get done, the very same people would put down the original strategy, and even criticize the task as problematic in the first place.

> *Betsey*: You would have wished that they would have just said, "I don't want to do this. I really question the strategy." It was, like, none of that. It was, "No, no, I'm okay. I'll get to it as soon as I can." [It was] really non-confrontational; being kind of nice about it; and that was not helpful. [Then later] they get these little snipe things about, like, 'Oh, this is not working right at all. I had a problem with this.'"

Betsey recalled how the resistance to change surfaced frequently during the organizational budgeting process. She remembered a time in a nonprofit organization where she worked, that a difficult financial decisions had to be made, and the organization's board of directors seemed unwilling to address the difficult issue. Rather than saying "There's a problem with this line item," or "That's more revenue than we can possibly raise," board members would equivocate with "Couldn't we come up with a better plan?" or worse yet, "We'll leave that to our director to figure out; let's move on to the next item now." For Betsey, people were not willing to address uncomfortable organizational issues, such as a major downsizing initiative.

> *Betsey*: I remember people [in the nonprofit organizations] not taking ownership. It was everybody nodding their heads like,' Okay, this is good, let's move on.', whereas [while the] for-profit sector may not be so great at downsizing either, when they decide to do it, they do it, and then they move on.

How do we reconcile this paradox and trade-off of not being willing to address thorny difficult organizational issues in the nonprofit sector? Betsey believes the answer is found in the impact of the organization's mission on the organizational decision-making process:

> *Betsey*: …there's a lot of difficult emotional stuff with a lot of nonprofits. You are seeing a lot of suffering. If you're on the front lines, dealing with homeless people, and healthcare, and poverty, and child abuse, do you want to then have that [uncomfortable conversation about] some of the other pieces of the way your organization is running?

Vignette #10: Purposeful relationships and networking

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• Build and nurture contact lists that are functional; job/career related; and focused on the needs of the enterprise.	• Build and nurture contact lists that are contextual; community-related; and focused on organizational mission and personal interests.

Betsey spent extensive time sharing with me the importance of networks in her life.

> *Betsey* : I always wanted to be the person who … knows somebody. I love to make connections for other people. It's not the name-dropping connection, but if you said, "I'm interested in this kind of work," then I would like to tell you about a person that I know.

While she was still in the corporate world, changing jobs from one large international management consulting firm to an even larger one, she noted the vast network of resources that she had created around her in the first company, was comprised almost exclusively of people from within that first company. For her work, she had traveled extensively throughout the United States and the world. It was a national, if not international network of people within the company and its client base that could be of help when she needed it. As a result, she knew what a lot of different people did, and who would be the best resource to call for any given need. The network was designed to assure that she could get ahead.

> *Betsey*: I really wanted to do a good job. I wanted to do my job well. I wanted to get promoted. I wanted to make more money. I wanted my work to be valued. And so everything that I did was really related to that…. I saw the benefit of the network because I knew lots of people and that could get answers to what I needed. It also helped me professionally when other people in the network thought highly of me because my reputation would come back to the people who were directly responsible for my career. … It would be another way to again show that I did good work and that people respected my work.

When she left the company, it became very clear that the network that Betsey had designed to benefit her work in one firm could not be transferred directly to benefit her work in the new firm. Other than the group of people who also joined the second company at the same time as Betsey, "the rest of that network was nowhere… defunct." She needed to find out who

the new people in the network were. Moreover, Betsey, the self-proclaimed master networker, began to understand the trap into which she had fallen:

> *Betsey*: You create a network for your benefit and what you can contribute to it, [while at the same time] creating a network that really benefited my employer. And then once I no longer had that employer, the network was kind of useless. That seemed like a big waste of my time.

In short, Betsey had created a network whose primary purpose was to serve her within her job responsibilities and career within a particular company. The Catch 22, however, is that the value of those local contacts in the insular context of one company, ultimately served the needs of that company, and could not be transferred and extended by Betsey to provide professional or personal value to her at the new company or for her loner-term career needs beyond.

Betsey was faced with two realities if she was to continue in the traditional corporate paradigm of a network that focuses only on company-specific value: first, she would need to re-create her network for the new position from scratch, with a focus on the new company; and second, if she did that, down the road she would find herself in the very same situation when she would be leaving for the next job position in yet another company. In any event, the prospects of rebuilding her network did not look pleasant ("It was sort of daunting to think I've got to start this all over again.… I don't really want to repeat history.")

Around the same time, Betsey had a conversation with a former nonprofit (Chamber of Commerce) executive who encouraged her to consider a more personal approach to networking. Betsey came to think that a new paradigm for her network might be possible; one that would transcend her position within the firm ("I had this *Ahah!* moment that I had a network that was not working for me… It was good for my client work, but it wasn't lasting."). She realized that she needed to cultivate a network of contacts and connections that attached to *her*, not to the company she was working for; a personal network that would travel with her from place to place. This is when she started to get involved with non-work related organizations and activities in her

community (e.g., the alumni association of her *alma mater*; women's professional organizations; etc.), attending events, and volunteering her time to help out. Soon her network began to evolve into a community-based network, which she maintains to this day.

> *Betsey* : When I leave the job, sure there are some people that may be… connections closely related to work [that I will lose], but I have so many more useful connections. [They don't say], "Well, you don't work here anymore. There's not much we can do [for you] here."

Betsey offered an example of how the community-based network made a real difference. After she switched to the nonprofit world, she found herself at a personal crossroads when she was assigned the responsibility to find a warehouse where the organization could move its large inventory of donated items which were being stored in a small office. Notwithstanding her extensive senior management consulting background, Betsey felt way in over her head:

> *Betsey* : I did not know anything about warehouses and renting spaces, but… we needed to take that step. I remember… standing in this empty warehouse with my cell phone and thinking, "Alright, you're a smart person, can you make three phone calls, and talk to a couple of different people about, 'Is this a smart idea?'" And I used my network. It wasn't my old network; it was my new -- newish -- network. And I called three different people and said, "I'm thinking about renting a warehouse space. What is it I need to know so I don't get in trouble?" And they gave me answers… That really gave me a lot of confidence that, "Hey, I may not know what I'm doing, but I can call someone, and I'm not without a network. I'm not without some sort of support."

Today, as a more seasoned nonprofit executive, Betsey has developed a large network, which he characterizes as a "web" rather than a "hub and spoke system". That is, the connections she makes are as rich and varied in their focus, as her many own personal interests; and she finds that the intersection of these interests tends to build and expand over time. The sum total of the contacts and resources available to her, therefore reflect and manifest the richness of her own issue/mission- driven life.

> *Betsey*: The web just gets thicker and thicker and thicker. And I think that's great, because if I care about something, whether it's a nonprofit or a particular issue, I feel as though I'm strengthening that by getting more people involved with it, and that's usually what the networking is around. Bringing more resources to bear on a particular issue.

Today, in hindsight, Betsey sees that her network in the business world was directed essentially to one primary focus and end result:

> *Betsey:* It all came down to making the firm money by making me more productive and a better worker, and having my projects go better, and then selling more projects. So, it all came to one particular point, as opposed to [today in the nonprofit sector], I have many interests and many goals now, and [my network] is all part of it.

Essentially, in her nonprofit life, Betsey's network has become a multidimensional tapestry of interests and connections, making her for-profit network appear rather one-dimensional, reflecting perhaps a characteristic of her for-profit career life:

> *Betsey* : [My work life in business was essentially] a flat career in many ways, even though it was a really rich career, I did a lot of really cool things, but it was pretty flat.

Vignette #11: Inevitability of stress

For-Profit (enterprise-driven) discourse	Nonprofit (mission-driven) discourse
• "Stress" results when personal values and needs are aggravated by demands of the enterprise. • Resilience to stress is derived from material benefits (e.g. good salary; easy job; work-life balance) • Resilience to stress drops as demands and expectations of the enterprise become less important than personal well-being.	• "Stress" results from uncertainty of enough resources to address the mission adequately. • Resilience to stress is derived from the subjective vision of a better society. • Resilience to stress drops as a survival mentality takes over (ongoing hand-to-mouth existence of the organization).

In my last interview with Paul, I asked him to characterize his life as a nonprofit executive – not a description of his day-to-day activities, but a sense of how he holds his job and career in his mind in the context of "work." His responses both to the initial inquiry and a follow-up question, reveal a transformed view of stress in his nonprofit work.

> *Paul*: I love my work life. It is very enjoyable. It's interesting to me. There's a minimum amount of tedium, or you know, just bureaucratic stuff that has to be done … I think it's challenging. I think that it employs at least a large number of skills that I have, and ability.
>
> It has certainly certain kinds of pressures and stress associated with it, but I probably wouldn't enjoy a job that didn't have any of that. And that part is built into the structure of life. If you're working on something that is challenging or important -- even if it isn't [something] that other people care a lot about -- you are stressed because you are never

sure [whether] things may or may not work out. There are always contingencies of the future that are unpleasant or challenging, that you never know, that you've got to be planning for, or wondering about.

I think stress is inevitable in some degree or another. I don't think it's the same kind of stress, entirely, that I used to experience when I was practicing law. The stress that I have now is a less aggravating type of stress than a lot of the stress that I recall that I had in private practice, where there were stresses from other peoples' agendas that I either found annoying or irrelevant, or I otherwise didn't respect. [It was] a client, or some business priority at the law firm that I felt was unimportant – causing me to feel stressed about something I didn't really care about, or I didn't think was that important.

I think that happens less -- considerably less -- in this [nonprofit] work environment. I live in a beautiful place; I have a lovely, not-long drive to work. I have a cool little office in a nice little village, working with nice people. That's all pretty good.

I don't work as many hours a week, certainly, as I did (mostly) over the time I was a lawyer. Although I think, as you get older in private [law] practice, most people end up working fewer hours than they did when they were young and middle-aged lawyers. It's not as though I was making a lot of 60-hour weeks in the last few years of my law practice, but over time, I generally worked pretty long hours very consistently for very very many years.

I work long hours now, by the world's standards. But I'm usually gone by 6:00 and I get here between 8:00 and 9:30 depending on the day, and I do work at night sometimes, or on the weekends, but not as a matter of habit; but the hours are a little less demanding I would say.

How would I characterize my work life today? You know, I like what I do.

Interviewer: *Do you experience stress with respect to the mission of the organization never quite being fulfilled -- that there's always more to do to complete fulfillment of the organization's mission?*

Paul: I don't, for the most part, feel overwhelmed by that. I guess I can see how a person might… Certainly it's true that in my lifetime no one will ever have completed the work of [land] conservation in [this] County. I don't know that that will ever happen. That just seems to me to be obvious and fine, and I don't worry about that.

I do think that it is very frustrating to have a lot of opportunities for conservation go wanting for lack of money. Money and financing for the work that we do is certainly one of the active sources of stress and *agita* that I have. And when I do worry and wake up at night thinking about the job, it's mostly about that….

For most organizations like ours, there's always an element of uncertainty about annual fundraising and where it's going to come from. And you always have to wonder, "Gee, you know what happens if we don't make our nut this year?" We are always behind the

eight ball. We spend the money and then we raise it at the end of the year. It's a horrible system.

And there is a train wreck scenario, where if we have a really bad annual appeal at the end of the year…we might have to lay people off, or cut back on programs. And that is a big source of stress, both in terms of the mission and also the people. I mean I don't want to lay anybody off here. These people are friends of mine and they are good people, working really hard for already-small amounts of money; and it would be small disaster for any of them to get laid off. But every year, it's mouth-to-mouth in that sense. So that part of it, I fantasize about whether or not there isn't some way to change that paradigm in some respect and work to develop, or at least improve upon it, so it isn't got that sort of knife edge to it that's there all of the time. So that is something I worry about.

Also the lack of big bucks for…acquisition of land. It's very frustrating to me and I am jealous of other organizations that have really large endowments that people have bequeathed to them. There is an awful lot we could do if we had anything approaching that sort of an asset to work with. Everybody that I know who knows about these things tells me I'm dreaming if I ever think that's going to happen here any time in the next few years because things are so bad financially.

So, when I feel stress, those are things I feel stress about -- and frustration.

Conclusion: The paradoxes of discourse

Two major findings emerge from the analysis presented in this chapter. First, notwithstanding the taken-for-granted business discourse that tends to dominate the landscape of the working world (see Chapter 1), a discrete organizational perspective or worldview that I call *not-for-profit discourse* does seem to emerge among people who change their work and career from the business world to the nonprofit service sector. Second, while this nonprofit discourse appears to be discrete and explicit in its nature, it is not unrelated to its more prevalent discourse-counterpart in the for-profit business world. In particular, it appears that certain topics we consider to be generically *organizational* in nature can have a "business flavor" when applied to the business world, and a "nonprofit flavor" when applied to the nonprofit service sector.

From these two findings, I conclude that for many (of not all) organizational topics, there exists a *paradox of discourse,* at which one endpoint sits the *for-profit discourse,* and at the other endpoint, the *nonprofit discourse* (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1
Paradox of Discourse

Organizational Topic	**Paradox**
X	**For-profit discourse** ⟷ **Nonprofit discourse**

Now, I build out this framework with content by adding an initial organizational topic; starting with the root topic *fundamental driver* (see Figure 5.2). The paradox for this first topic is made clear by the two respective *end-point paradigms* of each discourse that I have shown in this study; namely, *well-being of the enterprise* that is the fundamental driver for discourse in the for-profit world, and *a better world* that is the primary driver for discourse in the non-profit sector.

Figure 5.2
Paradox of Discourse for "Fundamental Driver"

Organizational Topic	***Paradox*** **For-profit discourse** ⟷ **Nonprofit discourse**
Fundamental Driver	Well-being of the enterprise ⟷ Better world

It is important to note that the two end-points of the paradox express the extreme condition for the given topic. That is, at the end-point each discourse is grounded in the most extreme manifestation of its respective worldview and perspective. The end-points are like those two little devil-angel characters standing next to each of our ears; each character promoting its own extreme point of view (presenting a paradox to our minds) and each telling us what to give up from the opposing point of view (presenting a trade-off we will need to make).

As shown in Figure 5.2, in the for-profit business world, at the extreme, the *well-being of the enterprise* is transcendent to any other concern; we are willing to do whatever it takes, at any cost and consequence to assure the vitality of the enterprise. At the other end point for the

nonprofit discourse, at the extreme, *a better world* supersedes all other considerations; for the sake of our mission of service, we will do anything -- even let the organization and its employees suffer – as long as we are making the world a better place.

Now, I fully build out of the table of organizational topics, using the analysis of this chapter as our basis (see Figure 5.3). In looking at this table, it should be obvious that no one really lives in the extreme discourse found at the endpoints of the paradox across these many topics. Yet there is great value to describing the endpoints in extreme terms: first to reveal the nature and magnitude of the *paradoxes* we consistently face as we reflect on our discourse for a given topic; second, to help us identify the *trade-offs* we might need to make as we change and transform our discourse from one end of the spectrum toward the other; and third, to reveal that the transformative experience of the individual may have an equally transformative impact on the actions, behaviors and decision-criteria of the organization as well. The application of this analysis will be made clear in the next chapter when we explore "Implications for policy, practice and research". There, we will see that the end-point extremes are not mutually exclusive; that indeed, they hint for us at policy issues, which, in turn, give rise to implications for practice and further research.

In conclusion, our analysis of the data reveals that the shift in discourse that the research participants experienced not only applies to the fundamental drivers of the two sectors, but also suggests a set of paradoxes and trade-offs relating to a host of organizational circumstances and conditions. Taken as an aggregated collection of experience, we see that the transformation in

Figure 5.3
Paradox of Discourse

Organizational Topic	***Paradox*** **For-profit discourse** ⟷ **Nonprofit discourse**
Fundamental Driver	Well-being of the enterprise ⟷ Better world
Intrinsic focus of energy and attention	Internal (on organization) ⟷ External (on mission)
Motivating objective	Profit ⟷ Mission
Personal reward	Make money ⟷ Make a difference
External object of purpose	Customers ⟷ Constituents
Last resort motivation	Enterprise survives ⟷ World is better off
Who do we do this for	Shareholders/owner ⟷ "Community"
Who we serve	Markets ⟷ Stakeholders
Evidence of success	Market share ⟷ Service activity
Relationships in the environment	Competition ⟷ Collaboration
Source of financial resources	Investment and sales ⟷ Program fees, grants and donations
Social networks	Corporate network ⟷ Community networks
Who do I work for?	"The man" ⟷ "The cause"
Community outreach	Cause marketing ⟷ Social engagement
Making the target	Accountability metrics ⟷ Whatever change for the better

discourse is really a transformation not only of personal identity about work and career across a broad spectrum of issues, but also about organizational style and behaviors across the very same topics, a connection that can be found in the literature (see, in particular, Ogawa, et al (1999) and Berger (2002) with regard to enduring organizational dilemmas in K-12 schools and higher education, respectively). While this study just touches the surface of this concept (individual

behaviors mirroring organizational behaviors), I believe that these findings may have opened the door to a profoundly deeper understanding of the dynamics that occur both for the subject individuals as well as for the organizations in which they work, if not also for the field in which they have they career, when people shift their work and career from the business world to the nonprofit service sector.

In the next chapter, this work concludes with an overview of the study in which I assert that the study has validated the relationship between and among the theoretical strands that were originally proposed in Chapter 2 regarding subjective career development; and transformative learning. I will also show how the data presented in Chapters 4 and 5 has significant implications for policy, practice and research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Overview of the Study

This research studies the lived experiences of five individuals with prior careers in the for-profit world who shifted their work and career focus to the nonprofit sector. Conceptually, the study is concerned with lived experience in the particular situational context of a dramatically *changed organizational environment* (from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector), and at the intersection of two particular lines of theoretical scholarship (see literature review in Chapter 2): *subjective career development* (how people shape their identity through work over a lifetime) and *transformative learning* (how people adjust their worldview to accommodate new or different situations).

Three research questions are at the heart of this work:

1. How do people from the for-profit world become aware of and deal with the differences they experience when they shift their work and career focus to the nonprofit sector?
2. How do the study participants deal with (i.e. respond to) the impacts of such differences?
3. As a result of their experience of this process, what changes, if any, do the study participants report with respect to their beliefs, viewpoints, and behaviors (i.e. What learning takes place during this process)?

To carry out the study, the research design (see Chapter 3) entailed a *qualitative* approach, *phenomenological* strategy, *narrative (storytelling)* methodology and *in-depth interview* technique to explore the personal experiences of the five research participants, each of whom met a defined set of selection criteria, and with whom I had no prior acquaintance. The results of these interviews (see Chapter 4) indicate that the career transition the research participants underwent resulted in a significant shift in their personal orientation to work life, from a priority focus on the *enterprise* (i.e. "company") in the for-profit business world, to a clearer and more purposeful motivation in the nonprofit sector to *serve and improve the quality of*

life of people. The experience of their career change evoked for the research participants a discrete *nonprofit mindset* which I have characterized as a *subjective identity* (both internal/self-perceived and external/public) of *personal difference-making*, *meaning-making*, and *fulfillment* in connection with their work and career that is rooted in the larger mission-context of the organizations for which they work.

Further analysis of the data (see Chapter 5) reveals that the experiences of the research participants actually reflect a more fundamental *transformation of discourse* regarding work and career. In particular, the research participants describe experiences where the language, values, behaviors and beliefs about work and career that they brought from their prior business life (where the focus is on keeping the enterprise alive), transformed as a result of the experience of working in an organizational context where work is focused on a mission to improve the quality of life for people in the world. That is, when applied to work circumstances in the nonprofit world, the business discourse about work transforms into a new and discrete *nonprofit discourse*, rooted in the subjective experience of those circumstances and in the context of the nonprofit organization's broader mission of service. Furthermore, the analysis also shows how the business and nonprofit discourses establish a set of paradoxes, that apply not only individuals but also to the organizations for which they work.

Implications for Policy

For this work, I define *policy* as one or more related principles used to inform and guide intentional strategic action. In this section, I explore some of the principles derived from this study that might shape such intentional action in the field. I begin with a brief review of what we have learned so far, and establish an underlying principle that is revealed in the analysis presented in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 5, I describe a set of *paradoxes of discourse* that emerged from the research data in connection with particular organizational topics (see Figure 5.3). These paradoxes

exemplify contradictory perspectives and worldviews that distinguish the nonprofit service sector from the for-profit business world (as manifested by language, symbols, norms, culture, behaviors, and general representations, etc.). I suggest that (a) the "end points" of each paradox, represent the most extreme manifestations of the two opposing perspectives for a given topic; and (b) in practical terms, few people or organizations actually hold an extreme point of view at the total exclusion of the opposite extreme end of the spectrum. Rather, I observe that most people and organizations tend to experience life with some elements of either/both discourses -- somewhere "between the two extremes," so to speak. In this regard, we can consider that the extreme end points are not places to land on, but "forces" drawing us toward one end or the other, offering a sense of movement, direction, and variability for discourse. As such, the endpoints of each paradox are not unrelated; it is more as if they are connected by a line that we might construe as a *continuum of discourse,* and on which we can "travel" between the two extreme points of view.

The continuum of discourse is thus a dynamic model of experience that not only encompasses a wide *range* of perspectives and worldviews on a given topic, but also accommodates *changing* perspectives and worldviews (toward one direction or the other), which may occur in a changing organizational context (as in the case of our research participants for this study). With these characteristics (range of choices and movement across that range), the continuum of discourse suggests that people have the capacity to find their "right place" on the continuum for any given situation or circumstance, as described in the following paragraph.

The principles of transformative learning described in Chapter 2 help us understand how the *continua of paradox* described above offers significant *implications for policy.* In the theory of transformative learning, perspectives that form our discourses in life are derived from "decisions" made in and from past experience. Over time, these perspectives can become taken for granted, in which case they can exert control over our discourse outside of our conscious awareness. In such a state, our reaction to life's circumstances can become automatic and at

worst, dysfunctional without our even knowing it; and choosing between trades-offs can be an uncomfortable process of painfully sacrificing one way of thinking for another.

Transformative learning is an iterative reflective process whereby we (a) bring such unconscious controlling perspectives into conscious awareness, (b) identify the degree to which they have become dysfunctional in our life, and (c) change or re-orient the perspectives so that they more functionally address current circumstances. Transformative learning enables us to shift our behaviors, actions, and choices from being automatic, unconscious, and reactive, to being intentional, aware, and responsive.

With respect to the paradoxes of discourse discussed in Chapter 5, transformative learning can help us to resolve contradictions and dilemmas, by enabling us to reflect on our unconscious perspectives, and to *choose intentionally* for any given topic, where on the continuum would be a more functional place to land. Moreover, because making a *conscious choice* is far more comfortable than making a *reactive sacrifice*, transformative learning benefits us by reducing or even eliminating the angst that is typically associated with making a trade-off within a paradox of discourse.

With the principles of transformative learning in mind, the primary policy implication of this study is that:

> People operating in the context of a change in work and career environment (in particular from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector) can use this research to be *intentional* in resolving the paradoxes of discourse that they are likely to experience as a result of differences between the two environments.

The intentionality promoted by such a policy implication means that people and organizations can *choose* to be more functional in the *values* that guide their decision-making; in their *actions and behaviors;* in the *resources* they seek to secure; and in the *relationships* they have with others around them. Topical dilemmas will thus be resolved by *choosing* to adjust perspectives toward one direction of the paradox or the other, not at the exclusion of either end-point extreme, but with consideration of both ends of the spectrum.

Implications for Practice

Practice is the strategic implementation of policy -- how policy plays out in the practical context of real-world behaviors, programs and activities, decisions, relationships, etc. For this research, practice occurs at the individual level, the organizational level, and at the level of support systems that serve both individuals and organizations.

Individuals

The following are examples of practice areas to which this research applies to individuals:

- **Work life.** The paradoxes of discourse can serve as a guide for people in the working world (both in nonprofit and for-profit work settings) in evaluating the impact their actions, decisions, values, and relationships are having on their satisfaction in the work place and on their work life effectiveness.
- **Career development.** People considering the shift from work and career in the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector can use this study to identify their personal qualities and characteristics (beliefs, attitudes and opinions; ways of behaving and acting; etc.) that might impinge on their ability to make the shift, and to guide them to make the personal adjustments necessary to find career success in making the shift.
- **Financial Planning.** For anyone considering a shift in work and career from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector, this study targets the question: *Will I have enough money?* In particular, this study encourages career changers to examine their personal discourse around livelihood, and to find their intentional "right place" on the *continuum of personal finances* with its trade-off between the extremes of (a) *financial growth, unabated material acquisition, and consumptive lifestyle;* vs. (b) *financial equilibrium, material sufficiency, and sustainable living*.

- **Psychotherapy.** Over the course of making a shift from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector, some career changers may encounter a degree of worrisome angst that at first glance might seem inexplicable. By illuminating topical issues and associated paradoxes of discourse in connection with such a shift, this study provides some explanation as to the source of such emotional discomfort, and offers some helpful guidance in addressing and resolving the dysfunction that often accompanies such distress.

Organizations

The following are examples of practice areas to which this research applies to organizations:

- **Nonprofit organizations** can use this study to strengthen staff leadership by creating a more accepting and nurturing environment in which workers who were previously in the for-profit business world can more easily resolved the paradoxes of discourse they encounter in their nonprofit work environment. This could be accomplished through management orientation programs for new staff that key in on the nature and style of the organization; and through personal coaching for employees who find the shift to be especially discomforting.
- Human resource departments of **business corporations** can use this research to develop in-house training programs and coaching services that address employee dissatisfaction that is identified to be caused by unresolved discourse paradoxes.

Support systems

The following are examples of practice areas to which this research applies to support systems:

- **Education and training** programs for chief executives, human resources officers, and board members of *nonprofit* organizations that would enable them to identify more effectively the kinds of business executives who would most likely be able to become nonprofit organizational leaders, and to help smooth the transition for such business executives as they make the shift into the nonprofit sector.
- **Advocacy** efforts that promote the existence and nature of a discrete nonprofit discourse. This study offers advocacy organizations in a variety of nonprofit service fields the grist to strengthen their case for stronger leadership support from the business community and greater engagement with individual business executives. The nonprofit field no longer needs to be defensive about why nonprofits act as they do, and they can use the paradoxes of discourse as a tool to more effectively communicate the needs of the nonprofit world to the corporate and philanthropic sectors.
- **Leadership development** programs that promote and encourage corporate executives to shift their working career to the nonprofit service sector. This study provides the basis for a curriculum (see next section) in their leadership training programs. Participants in such programs would examine the subjective realities of their corporate life and explore ways to adjust their corporate discourse to be more effective in the nonprofit leadership context.

Implications for Research

Implications for research based on this study fall into three categories: first, is follow-on research to *broaden the considerations* of this work under different research conditions or study designs; second, research to refine, embellish, and *deepen the inquiry* that this study has begun;

and third, studies that *develop materials and tools* to further policy and practice in the areas that this study has addressed.

Broaden the Considerations

Follow-on studies that address the research findings herein under different research parameters:

- Across a large sample of research participants. How many shifters are there in the US and internationally? Across a statistically valid sample of that universe, what do career shifters report of their experience?
- Across a longer time span (i.e. a longitudinal study). What happens over long term to shifters? Do they return to the for-profit work? If so, what issues lead them to return back?
- By a researcher who has little or no prior work or career experience in the nonprofit world. Do the researcher's biases arising from an extensive prior career in the nonprofit fields affect the study findings?

Deepen the inquiry

Research that enhances, embellishes, and builds on the work of this study:

- Do the findings of this study apply across lines of class, race, and culture (e.g. European, Asian, Latin, African workers; line workers vs. executive managers; wealthy vs. poor; etc.)?
- Do these study findings apply to people who shifted their work and career in the other direction (i.e. nonprofit executives who shift work and career to the for-profit world)?
- Does organizational size matter (research to see if the experiences are the same when the shift is to a large nonprofit)? Does the size and complexity of a nonprofit organization create a more enterprise-driven culture (regardless of the mission)?

- Do young career shifters have the same experience as mid-career and late-career shifters (focus the research on different (earlier) developmental stages of the participants)?
- Does the organizational discourse transform when the shift is not "work" or "career" related (e.g., do nonprofit volunteers experience the same shift in discourse as workers do)?
- How would this research apply to those who shift their careers into a particular nonprofit field, (e.g. health care, social service, the arts, etc.) or to a specific geographic region (e.g. the nonprofit community of a given a metropolitan area)?
- What other organizational topics could be included in the discussion of transformed discourse across sectors (see table 5.1)? What is the "continuum of discourse" look like for each topic?

Develop materials and tools

Research to create materials and tools that would be needed to implement the "implications for policy and practice" previously described:

- **Profiling instruments** based on the paradoxes of discourse that will assess a person's subjective orientation to work and career; and identify perspectives the person holds that might make them well- or ill-suited to make the shift to the nonprofit service sector. Such an instrument would inform people as to the qualities and characteristics they would need to change or work on, so as to be better suited for a smooth transition from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector.
- **Curricula** for educational programs run by academic institutions, professional societies, and support organizations for individuals regarding personal development and leadership training programs to help workers in the business world to prepare subjectively for a career shift into the nonprofit world.

- **Clearing house databases** to build a warehouse of information that establishes the nature and magnitude of career shifting, and trends that might be helpful in developing related policies and programs for nonprofit leadership development.

Conclusion

This study began as an exploration of the lived experience of five individuals who shifted their working career from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector. As a phenomenological study, the research focuses on both the objective circumstances of this shift, as well as the subjective experience that accompanied such circumstances as told by the research participants. In the process of analyzing the narrative stories, I discovered a discrete discourse in connection with nonprofit work life that helps us to shape a model of analysis regarding the paradoxes of discourse that emerge for anyone who makes the kind of work shift that the research participants made. Implications for policy, practice, and research, all relate to the question of work and career, in the particular context of a changing organizational environment (from for-profit to nonprofit).

Admittedly, this has been an *exploratory study*. This work touches only the surface of the many issues raised within its many of the findings and implications. Yet one last implication remains to be presented, which I would like to declare as a conclusion; namely, the degree to which this study enables us to hypothesize a *new metaphor for career* that is embedded within the impacts of the nonprofit discourse that we assert is identifiable and discrete. The reader will recall the typology of career metaphor (see Chapter 2), in which the most recent (current) scholarship in this field characterizes "career" as a *repository of learning* and as a *creative process*.

I believe that with this study of people who shifted their careers from the for-profit business world to the nonprofit service sector, the concept of career metaphor has evolved to a new level, based on the mission-driven nature of nonprofit discourse. In every case, the research

participants in this study express a higher level of fulfillment and satisfaction, of meaning-making and purposefulness that they found in their nonprofit work lives. This suggests to me, that career for them has become a source of self-actualization; of realizing one's full potential for enhancing the quality of life for humanity in one way or another.

Thus, the notion of *career as self-actualization* would be the final implication of this work. The degree to which people see their work life as a source of meaning-making, difference-making and purposefulness suggests the value of moving one's discourse for work and career toward the end of the spectrum where *fulfillment through service* is a high-order priority. I believe that if people can play out their careers within such a metaphorical context, we all will find ourselves working in a more sustainable, equitable, collaborative, and caring organizational environment that holds as its core vision, the improvement of quality of life for all peoples of the world, wherever they live, work, learn, play, visit and stay well.

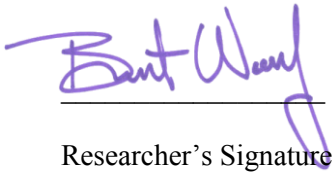
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

CONSENT FORM FOR VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I volunteer to participate in this qualitative study and understand that:

1. My involvement will entail participation in up to three or more personal interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes each.
2. I will be answering questions that address my experiences as a person who has shifted my work and career from the business world to the nonprofit sector. I understand that the goal of this research is to understand the essence of my experiences and what changes, if any, occurred in my viewpoints, attitudes, values and beliefs resulted over the course of my transition to the nonprofit sector.
3. To facilitate data analysis, the interviews will be recorded and the sessions transcribed.
4. Unless I otherwise consent in writing, I expect that my name will not be used, nor will I be identified personally in any reports or materials produced in connection with this study. I also understand that actual quotes of my statements may be used, but will be attributed to a pseudonym set up for me.
5. Due to the small number of participants in this study (six to ten), I understand that there is a possibility that I may be identified as a participant, even with all precautions outlined above.
6. The researcher will keep all records in which I am identified by name in a secure location. These records will not be shared with anyone.
7. I may withdraw from this study at any time.
8. I will be offered the opportunity to review the report prior to its distribution and publication.
9. I understand that the findings from this study will be included in Burton Woolf's doctoral dissertation and may also be included in research presentations and submissions to professional journals.
10. I may contact the researcher, Burton I. Woolf (bwoolf@acad.umass.edu, 413-548-9993) or his dissertation chair, Professor Joseph B. Berger (jbberger@educ.umass.edu, 413-545-3610) at any time should I have any questions or concerns.



January 3, 2010

Researcher's Signature Date

Burton I. Woolf

Participant's Signature Date

Participant's Name (printed)

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (FIRST INTERVIEW)

Interview #1: Exposition of circumstances and situations.

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to explore the experience of people who have made the shift from the for-profit world to the nonprofit world primarily in a management capacity, and beyond that, there's not that much more to say.

The conceptual underpinnings of the study are about career, about how you hold your identity as a function of your work over the course of your lifetime. And it's about new things happening in your life and how you accommodate them. So those are the two issues, career identity and transforming your own experience of how things work in the world.

In terms of the actual interview process, we'll start with the story of how you made the shift. I would appreciate that you start the story from the for-profit side, looking at both the circumstances of your career in the for-profit world, as well as your motivations for being there, and your experience of it. From there, we'll look at the moment when you decided to make the shift, and what it was that led you to think to do that. From there you can describe what happened from then until the moment you actually made the shift and your experience of that moment. And lastly, your experience of being in the nonprofit world.

You may take as much time as you like, sharing as much detail as you would like.

Prompting Questions

1. Describe your career in the for-profit world.

- Start as early in your life as you would like.
- Milestone (time-based) circumstances, events, roles, relationships
- Type organizations involved
- What else was happening in your personal life
- Concurrent social and family development
- Lifestyle development and changes

2a. Describe the moment [time] when you first thought about (considered) shifting away from the for-profit world.

- When, where, what position did you hold
- Personal and professional circumstances going on around you

2b. Describe the moment [time] when you finally acknowledged that you had shifted your career to the [use the language the subject uses for "nonprofit"] sector.

3. Describe what happened as you made the shift (from the moment of 2a to the moment of 2b)

Prompt as necessary with:

- What milestone events and circumstances
- Who helped
- Training
- Job hunting approach (who helped, how many interviews)
- Tell me about the moment when you took [this/your first] job in the nonprofit world.

4. Describe how you feel these days about your career -- now that you work in the [use the language the subject uses for "nonprofit"] sector.

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