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Gold Star vs. North Star Leaders:

Role Orientations and Arbitrage in Crossing Sector Boundaries

A dissertation presented

by

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Gold Star vs. North Star Leaders:

Role Orientations and Arbitrage in Crossing Sector Boundaries

ABSTRACT

Through a qualitative study of professionals whose careers span the public and private sectors, I develop theory on boundary crossing in a career. I find that two role orientations – *gold-star* and *north-star* orientation – activate the boundary-crossing process. Gold-star oriented professionals seek to cross sectors to help society and focus on gaining authority by climbing well-institutionalized paths of career advancement. North-star oriented professionals seek to cross sectors to solve a complex societal problem and focus on gaining expertise by learning and building community around the problem. I introduce the concept of *arbitrage*, a narrative-based boundary-crossing strategy where professionals claim currencies, like status and knowledge, to craft a story of value creation for the new sector. After the boundary is crossed, I find these professionals enact their roles using two distinct adaptation behaviors, depending on their career orientation. Based on inductive analyses of 40 career stories, I propose a process model of how people cross sector boundaries over the course of a career.

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A few years ago, I sat at the crossroads of U.S.-China relations, coordinating a diplomatic dialogue between the two nations that covered both strategic and economic issues. I worked with a wide range of the U.S.'s China experts, yet I found very few had both public sector and private sector experience in dealing with China. This lack of experience struck me as odd since China is the world's largest political economy, a place where business and government are intertwined and significantly influence each other.

It is impossible to fully understand China without understanding both sides of the story. Yet the longer I worked on this dialogue, the more I came to realize that the U.S. government had very few public-private professionals working on China; compounding the problem, the government also separated its experts in politics (human rights, nuclear security, military spending, bilateral relations) and economics (trade, currency manipulation, financial regulation) with few if any people to serve as integrators. The absence of public-private leaders was particularly acute on the political side where virtually no one had private sector experience in China, especially at top Fortune 500 companies. If our human capital remained splintered across boundaries, how would the U.S. ever move the needle on our relationship with China, the most important bilateral relationship in this century?

This dissertation is an effort to address, in a small way, this concern. I care deeply about the United States and hope that we can develop leaders who understand both public and private sectors for the good of our national security. I recognize there is a strong skepticism in the United States towards people who move between the public sector and the private sector, often called the revolving door. If this dissertation starts any

conversation, I hope it is a conversation about the upside of crossing sectors and the importance of developing leaders who can see both sides of the story.

I am very grateful to the many people who have helped me along this long dissertation journey. First and foremost, my committee chair, Robin Ely, who continues to inspire me with her brilliant mind, her generosity towards her students, and her dedication to developing women leaders – in the classroom and in the field. She is, without a doubt, the best committee chair a doctoral student could ever have. I am thankful she agreed to advise me and provide hours of constructive feedback, detailed notes, encouragement and wise counsel. Second, Lakshmi Ramarajan, who served not only as an extraordinary committee member but also as a friend and colleague. Blending work and family life, Lakshmi and I had many advising conversations in her office as well as at kids' birthday parties, playdates, and even walks on campus after dropping our kids off at school. (Side note: Eliot and Emma say a big "thank you" to Aran and Mira.) Lakshmi's smart advice and good cheer always came at the perfect time. I always left our conversations intellectually stimulated and ready to tackle the next big idea. Third, Hannah Riley Bowles is a truly wonderful mentor who has advised me as a committee member and as a faculty member through many events – personal and professional – in the past four years. Hannah has been my north star. She has anchored me in public service, encouraged me to build my research in the nascent area of cross-sector careers, and served as a terrific sounding board for a perpetual flow of ideas.

Turning to the study, I thank the interviewees who took time out of their busy schedules to share their career stories, fears and aspirations with me. I found their experiences and insight invaluable to this dissertation. Their willingness to be interviewed at length for this doctoral research was as helpful as it was heart warming.

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I loved being a part of the HBS research community and enjoyed being part of a vibrant doctoral cohort. I count myself very lucky to be in Wyss House my first year where I sat near the best doctoral office in the world – John Korn, Jen Mucciarone, Marais Young and Dianne Le. The four of them welcomed our class of management students – Everett Spain, Michele Rigolizzo and me – and made every effort to ensure we felt supported in our entry to academia. Later, Karla Cohen would join the office as a star addition to the team and a dear friend of mine. My fellow doctoral students kept our conversations lively and absorbing both inside and outside of class; many of them have become close friends and collaborators.

I am also indebted to three qualitative methods communities in the Boston area. I shared early versions of my research with Michael Pratt and the qualitative methods seminar participants at Boston College. Mike stands tall as one of the best professors I have ever had. One part editor, one part scholar, with a huge heart and a sharp mind, Mike encouraged all of his students to reach for greater heights and to conduct more rigorous research. Leslie Perlow and her Craft course participants also provided invaluable feedback on a later draft of my research. Finally, I appreciated the warm

community of qualitative scholars who support each other's work at the regular Field Research conference in Boston. From the roundtable discussions on initial study ideas to coffee break advice on field sites, I found the Boston area field conference a robust and intellectually engaging gathering of scholars.

My community away from the HBS centered around Kirkland House, one of Harvard College's undergraduate houses. As a resident tutor and team leader at Kirkland, I found advising students on their academic, social and career goals immensely fulfilling. The 700 students that I lived with and advised over the course of my four years at Kirkland have developed into terrific community members at Harvard and, after graduation, the world at large. I am blessed to have been part of their journey. My fellow tutors have been a source of endless support and community. They have studied with me in the dining hall, served as brainstorm partners, encouraged me when my spirits flagged, and celebrated with me at milestones. I particularly want to thank Dr. Aaliyah El-Amin, Allison Goff, Philip Gant, Rory Lindsay, Dina Wang, Scott Poulson-Bryant, and Lumumba Seegars for their exceptional support.

Finally, I am here only because of the strong support of my family. Long ago, I won the parent lottery. I am so blessed to have such supportive, loving and caring parents. My parents gave me so much, including a new language, home, country, and education, when they came here for their graduate studies decades ago from sunny Taiwan. My father, Dr. Peng, inspired me to do research; my mother, who stopped her doctoral studies for family reasons, inspired me to finish what she started. As a parent myself now, I belatedly realize what sacrifices they had to make and what enormous

dedication they had to my carefree and curious childhood. So, thank you Ma and Ba. I hope I can raise my children with as much love, support and fun as you gave me.

My kids Eliot and Emma are the loves of my life and are the reason I get up in the morning (aided by 6AM ukulele renditions of Star Wars and Katy Perry songs). As babies, toddlers and now pre-schoolers, Eliot and Emma saw me through these past few years of teaching and dissertation "book writing" with good humor and big hugs. They cheered tallyho and made complex Lego gifts and colored crayon drawings to root me on. Growing up with 400 Harvard undergraduates each year is not a typical childhood, but Eliot and Emma thrived in the Kirkland House environment and made lifelong friends. At Kirkland, they developed their care for others, inquisitive minds, and strong independent streaks. I hope one day Eliot and Emma will understand that everything I do, I do it for them.

Last, but most importantly, I want to thank my husband John who has been the most incredible partner and my *jjak* for all our adventures in life. Together, we committed to always doubling our happiness and dividing any challenges. John was the first to encourage me to pursue my doctoral studies. Indeed, we first met over a decade ago over coffee at Café Algiers in Harvard Square, introduced by our friend Spencer Rhodes, to discuss whether I should pursue a doctorate in Cambridge. In the years since, John has become my best friend and better half. John has continued his brilliant research (thank you, MacArthur Foundation) and has developed a legion of loyal students from the classes he taught at Harvard Kennedy School and from his advising at Kirkland House. Throughout it all, he has been a superhero dad and husband and has shouldered the lion's share of our parenting this spring as I sprinted to the finish line. With his trademark wit and generosity, John helped me solve some of my toughest problems and gave me the runway to really write my research. For his love, patience, support and encouragement, I am forever grateful.

To my parents, Cheng-tai Peng and Mien Peng,
with love and gratitude

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century is rife with complexity. Leaders in business and government alike face a chaotic, turbulent, and rapidly changing business environment with global crises (e.g. 2008 Financial Crisis, 2010 Euro Crisis), global political uprisings (e.g. 2011 Arab Spring), global disasters (e.g. 2004 earthquake and tsunami), global technology (e.g. 2004 and 2006 founding of Facebook and Twitter respectively), global governance (e.g. creation of the G-20 group of nations), and global population growth (e.g. adding 2.5 billion people by 2050), among other issues. The rise of political economies such as China and Russia highlight the mutual dependence of business and government in emerging markets.

Global issues – such as climate change, cybersecurity and the rise of China – are challenges that go beyond a single sector and demand a new kind of leader, one who understands both the public and private sectors. Leaders in the twenty-first century will need to adapt to this complex global environment. Much like the onset of modernity reconfigured livelihoods and the way people related to each other in the twentieth century, so too will the onset of globalization reconfigure our organizations and the way leaders lead in this century. Yet, to the detriment of society, there are few leaders who can draw together or even understand multiple sectors (Kochan, 2012). Organizations have recently started to train cross-sector leaders through development programs like the World Economic Forum's Global Leadership Program (Khurana and Baldwin, 2013); yet there is a surprising paucity of scholarship on this critical leadership development path across multiple sectors. In this age of global cross-sector challenges, how do people construct multi-sector careers?

To answer this question, I delve deeply into the careers of cross-sector leaders. This type of career is important for addressing the kinds of complex problems that the world is facing. The fundamental building block in a cross-sector leader's career is the sector boundary crossing, yet little is known about this boundary-crossing process. In this dissertation, I focus on the following research question: why and how do people cross sector boundaries? Scholarly literature is limited as the careers of cross-sector leaders – while important – remain understudied.

In this chapter, I set the stage for my study by reviewing the extant literature on the distinction between the public and private sectors, the "revolving door" and sector switching, and careers across boundaries. In doing so, my goal is to shift attention away from the popular notion of the boundaryless career to focus instead on how and why people cross boundaries in a career.

1.1 The Distinction Between Public and Private Sectors

Crossing sector boundaries is particularly interesting to examine because the public sector and the private sector are distinct. The public sector, commonly known as "government," is divided into three levels in the United States –federal, state and local – tasked with serving and governing the citizens of the nation. The private sector, commonly known as "business," includes organizations focused on profit generation in competitive markets.

Crossing sector boundaries is more challenging than moving between organizations in the same sector due to the many differences between the public and private sectors. Among the differences, perhaps most prominent and relevant to the challenges of moving across sector boundaries are the public sector's bureaucratic constraints and performance measurement challenges (Moore, 1995). For example, private sector executives crossing to the public sector will face more stringent limitations on their managerial actions such as the ability to hire, fire and incentivize employees; to unilaterally decide on contracting operations; and to conduct procurement at their own discretion (Kelman, 1990; Moore, 1995; Kelman, 2005). These bureaucratic constraints are tied to accountability mechanisms that ensure that public servants are responsive to the public good and not to politics (Moore, 1995). Private sector executives crossing sectors into government will also contend with a more complex and multi-dimensional measurement of performance. Unlike the private sector where performance management is predominantly measured through financial performance, public managers must measure their performance in creating "public value" which includes but is not limited to financial performance. Acknowledging some of these sector differences, scholars have suggested sectors work together in collaborative governance arrangements (Donahue and Zeckhauser, 2006) to take advantage of synergies in areas like information and productive capacity.

Public management scholars have long noted that the public and private sectors are very different contexts (Allison, 1984; Ring and Perry, 1985). Scholars traditionally point to structural, environmental and ethical differences between the public and private sectors (Boyne, 2002; Allison 1984; Van der Wal et al, 2008). Decision-making is also an area of difference; private sector managers rely more on speedy data-driven analytical methods, whereas public sector managers depend more on intuition and deep, local knowledge of policy making (Nutt, 2000; Nutt 1999; Nutt and Backoff, 1993; Drezner, 2014). In addition, managers in the public sector are less satisfied with their jobs than managers in the private sector (Rainey, 1983; Lackman, 1985). Unlike their private sector counterparts, public sector managers must contend with policy ambiguity, artificial time constraints, and personnel constraints (Ring and Perry, 1985; Kelman, 2005). Managers in the public sector must also deal with substantial public attention and the lack of a bottom line (Allison, 1984).

While some scholars have argued that the two sectors have become more similar than different (Hood, 1991; Poole et al 2006; Van der Wal et al, 2008), the litany of differences between the sectors (see Table 1) suggests otherwise. The idea that private management practices and skills can be "transferred directly to public management tasks in a way that produces significant improvements is wrong" (Allison, 1984).

Table 1: Differences between Managing in the Public and Private Sectors

Difference	Public Sector	Private Sector	Source
Time Horizon/Tenure in Job	Short time horizons due to political calendar with no successor training (4 years for President)	Longer time horizon based on market with successfor training (10 years+ for CEO)	Allison, 1984; Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976; Neustadt, 1979; Allison, 1984
Organizational Performance	Greater turnover, greater cautiousness, rigidity; more bureaucratic	More innovative	Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976; Boyne 2002
Personnel System	More constraints to fire; career/political appointee system; weaker networks between hires	Fewer constraints to hire and fire; strong networks between hires	Allison, 1984 Neustadt, 1979; Moore, 1995
Incentives	Tougher to incentivize good performance with money	Easier to incentivize	Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976; Moore, 1995
Personal Characteristics	Lower work satisfaction and organizational commitment; less materialistic	Higher worker satisfaction & organizational commitment; more materialistic	Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976; Boyne 2002
Equity and efficiency	Emphasis on equity; breadth of impact for "public interest"	Emphasis on efficiency	Allison, 1984; Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976
Public Scrutiny and Expectations	More open, scrutinized by public with routine contact with press. Greater expectations for fairness from officials	More closed, less exposed to public and press. Less expectation for fairness from business	Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976; Allison, 1984; Moore, 1995; Neustadt, 1979
Authority	General management duties/authority shared with competing institutions (e.g. Congress); less autonomy; build consensus	General management duties centralized in CEO; more autonomy; execute orders	Neustadt, 1979; Allison, 1984; Moore, 1995
Decision-making	Multiplicity and diversity of objectives with greater vagueness and conflicting goals (tradeoffs)	Fewer objectives with more clarity and fewer tradeoffs	Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976; Moore, 1995
Coercive powers	Unique sanctions and coercive powers	Few if any coercive powers for mandatory participation	Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976
Legal/Formal Constraints	Legislative and judicial scrutiny constrains executive action; more external sources of formal influence	Relatively free from legislative and judicial scrutiny; higher autonomy; fewer external sources of formal influence	Allison, 1984; Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976; Moore, 1995
Performance measurement	No clear bottom line	Clear bottom line (profit, performance, survival)	Allison, 1984; Neustadt, 1976; Moore, 1995

1.2 Sector Switching and the "Revolving Door"

The Revolving Door

The revolving-door phenomenon – i.e., the movement of U.S. federal public employees into the lobbying industry – is the most prominent conceptualization of professionals crossing sector boundaries. In recent political science and economic literature, lobbyists are commonly portrayed as former federal employees who exploit their network of former government official colleagues on behalf of their corporate clients (Blanes i Vidal et al, 2012).

Revolving-door professionals are active participants in a market for political connections. While some scholars conceptualize lobbyists as "information transfer" vessels to inform government officials of corporate interests, the majority of the recent empirical literature supports the "connections" view that lobbyists are primarily hired to trade on their connections and gain access to critical policymakers in order to influence public policy (Blanes i Vidal et al, 2012; Bertrand, Bombardini and Trebbi, 2014). In this money-for-connections context, revolving door professionals are mercenary men (or women)-for-hire who trade access to their network for private sector salaries far exceeding their public sector pay.

Firms and trade associations hire these revolving door professionals to act as indirect links to government officials currently in office. Revolving door professionals are valued for their ability to help firms shape their political and regulatory environment; studies show firms engaged in corporate political activity, such as lobbying, achieved approximately 20% higher economic value (Lux et al, 2011; Mellahi et al, 2016). The success of revolving door professionals depends on the strength of their ties to current government officials. Revolving door professionals often move directly from federal employment to the multi-billion dollar lobbying industry and reap monetary benefits when their political party controls one or both chambers of Congress; lobbyists also lose significant revenue when their connected government official leaves office (Blanes i Vidal, Draca and Fons-Rosen, 2012).

Revolving door professionals also act as mercenaries on policy issues and are paid to be forceful advocates for their client's interests. While some lobbyists have expert knowledge of a specific public policy issue, empirical evidence suggests that lobbyists work on the issues of their affiliated congressional connections and, when their connected congressmen or women switch committee assignments (e.g. from health care to defense), the lobbyists also switch issues to the new committee's portfolio (Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi, 2011).

Despite the exhaustive revolving-door literature in the fields of strategy and economics, much of the existing research has been conducted at the firm level, with limited research at the individual level on the career paths of revolving door professionals; most importantly, however, the field has been relatively silent on another type of cross-sector professional: the "multi-sector athlete" (Lovegrove and Thomas, 2013), who also works across public-private boundaries. While the revolving door professionals are moving sectors for instrumental purposes, these multi-sector actors, whom I term *public-private professionals*, are moving sectors for the purpose of public service and social impact. These professionals actively resist the well-worn paths to lobbying firms even though those career paths are financially lucrative, convenient and well understood in Washington. Unlike revolving door professionals, who predominantly move from the public sector to the private sector, public-private professionals cross sectors in both directions, from public to private sector and private to public sector.

Sector Switching

Sector-switching is a nascent area of research in public administration. Sector switching is defined as career moves from the public sector to the private sector or the private sector to the public sector (Bozeman and Ponomariov, 2009). Surprisingly, sector-switching research is rare in the management field, and what little exists rarely mentions the substantial work on the revolving door phenomenon in the economics literature. Even in the public administration literature, the first major studies on sector-switching appeared only recently (Pittinsky and Messiter, 2007; Bozeman and Ponomariov, 2009; Su and Bozeman, 2009a, 2009b). Recent scholarship in that field has focused on strategies to help business executives enter government (Pittinsky and Messiter, 2007) and the positive career consequences of switching from a business to a government job (Bozeman and Ponomariov, 2009). Researchers have found that public managers with prior private sector work experience are more likely to be promoted and supervise more people relative to their peers (Bozeman and Ponomariov, 2009). While serving the public may motivate sector switchers, researchers caution that the positive desire to serve society could be tempered by the neutral (or even negative) views of serving in government bureaucracy (Apfel, 2012).

Scholars have also studied sector-switching in a European context and determined that sector switching constitutes roughly 20 percent of all job-to-job mobility and that the sector-switching trend is increasing, especially with middle managers (Fredericksen and Hansen, 2014). A recent study focused on why public sector professionals jump to the private sector in Denmark (Hansen, 2014). This study uncovered several motives: higher salary level, the desire to create value, having room for drive and creativity and the desire for flexible and flat structure were all positively related to private sector job shifts; in contrast, the desire to serve society and have job security were are all negatively related to private sector job shifts. Finally, research on moves from private sector jobs to public sector jobs in Denmark found that managers were more likely to switch from private to public sector than their professional or technical peers. Private sector managers with fewer subordinates were more likely to make the switch than their peers who had more subordinates (Su and Bozeman, 2009).

This small handful of studies highlights the lack of research on the increasingly important sector switching phenomenon and, more broadly, the understudied nature of the public-private sector switch. Few, if any, studies have examined professionals who have switched sectors in both directions; all of the research discussed here has been uni-directional – either the public to the private sector or vice versa. A large portion of the research in the field is rooted in the European context, which differs significantly from the American context in governmental structure, ethics boundaries, and political appointee policy. While the state of the field is promising, it would be useful to build on existing research to understand why and how people switch sectors in both directions, especially in the U.S. context.

1.3 The Boundaryless Career Misnomer

The boundary crossing between the public and the private sectors is particularly important for the development of multi-sector leaders in the 21st century. Yet, the extant literature on boundary crossing in a career is limited. For most of the twentieth century, people had few expectations or opportunities to cross boundaries in their careers. A career is defined as the unfolding sequence of a person's work over time (Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence, 1989). Traditionally, organizations housed people in internal labor markets (Doeringer and Piore, 1985) where careers unfolded within the boundaries of one organization (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) with limited movement to other organizations.

In the past two decades, however, broad societal shifts have changed how organizations operate and finance themselves (Kochan, 1986; Osterman et al, 2001) and, as a consequence, how professionals think about constructing their careers. Under increasing financial pressure from shareholders in the 1980s, organizations disavowed the traditional psychological contract with their workers of loyalty for job security (Cappelli, 1999; Hall, 2002) and released people from the "bounds" of the organization. As newly minted free agents, these professionals now had to make decisions about crossing organizational boundaries.

Scholars acknowledge that careers in the twenty first century rarely remain confined within the boundaries of one organization; yet instead of focusing on how people cross these organizational boundaries, scholars have hurried to herald the arrival of the "boundaryless" career (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) – a misnomer that implies the lack of boundaries altogether. Examining the boundaryless career more closely, in fact, reveals many boundaries. People move across boundaries frequently and the so-called "boundaryless" career is filled with boundary crossings. These boundary crossings are implied in the notion of a boundaryless career, but are overlooked under the assumption that boundaries do not exist. The phenomenon of the boundaryless career is thus underdeveloped since researchers know relatively little about how and why people cross boundaries during their careers (Inkson et al, 2012).

Boundaries are the subject of countless studies, yet surprisingly few of these studies speak to the process of boundary crossing. Research on boundaries has focused on the borders that define and divide socio-economic classes, professions, organizations and more (Lamont and Molnar, 2002). Boundaries are defined as "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices and even time and space" and to "separate people into groups" (Lamont and Molnar, 2002; Epstein, 1992) such as organizations or sectors. Boundaries are initially symbolic, but can become social when widely agreed upon (e.g. status differences between sectors) and can manifest in "unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources…and social opportunities" (Lamont and Molnar, 2002). While the literature on boundary theory is deep (Jenkins, 2008; Peteraf, 1993; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003), scholars have decried the lack of understanding of boundary mechanisms like bridging and crossing (Lamont and Molnar, 2002). For careers, nascent theorizing about boundaries proposes that boundaries constrain, enable and punctuate careers (Gunz and Mayrhofer, 2010) with social actors like reference groups acting to constrain boundaries (Grote and Hall, 2013).

Scholars have also examined the phenomenon of boundary spanning which differs from boundary crossing in that boundary spanning presupposes that the person develops and maintains ties to each side of the boundary. Since boundary crossing does not make that assumption, boundary spanning sheds limited light on the actual process of boundary crossing. For example, boundary spanners help facilitate collaborations within complex organizations by conveying and translating information between collaborators (Carlile

2002; Carlile, 2004), coordinating tasks with other stakeholders (Ancona and Caldwell, 1992), and acting as internal liaisons (Katz and Tushman, 1983). This research has focused on people within firms and pays little attention to people moving between firms. As such, boundary-spanning research has limited applicability to the boundary-crossing context. For example, a boundary-crossing executive is not necessarily a boundary-spanner as she could limit contact or sever ties with her private sector firm after crossing due to personal choice, formal regulations or political pressure. In summary, while boundary-spanning research offers some insights into the translating and coordinating activities of boundary spanners, it has limited relevance for understanding the process of boundary crossing. In short, the field of management and organizational behavior lacks theory on how and why people cross boundaries in a career.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHOD

This study examines how and why people cross sector boundaries in their career. I considered the appropriate methodological fit for this research question (Edmonson and McManus, 2007) and decided it was appropriate to conduct an inductive, qualitative study since research on sector boundary crossing is nascent. To address my research question, I studied people who have had careers in both federal government and large corporate business. This setting is an "extreme case" (Eisenhardt, 1989) of the general phenomenon of boundary crossing because the public and the private sectors are very different. In this study of public-private leaders, I sought to develop theory about the sector boundary crossings underpinning careers.

To deepen my understanding of public-private professionals, I gathered press clippings and announcements of public-to-private sector and private-to-public sector job changes from daily newsletters posted on popular mass media sites. I read broadly in both popular press and business and government trade journals to gather information about the public-private setting for these boundary crossings. I conducted five interviews with a range of professionals who had made the switch between sectors, from young professionals recently graduated from college within the past 2-3 years to executives who had 10-20 years of experience in their careers. These interviews helped me identify key areas to explore in my interviews as well as develop, test and refine my interview protocol for my study.

In addition to these interviews, in Spring 2014, I also attended one career panel at a business school and two multi-hour panels at a public policy school that featured alumni speakers who discussed their multi-sector careers after graduation. In my preliminary research, I sought to understand how the public-private crossing was similar to and different from other types of crossings (e.g. the public-academia boundary crossing). To get a sense of the distinctiveness of the public-private setting, I reached out to three business school academics who had served in the public sector to hear about their boundary crossings.

2.1 Sample and Sampling Strategy

Using a theoretical sampling strategy, which is appropriate for developing theory from qualitative data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I selected participants from a pool of elite professionals who strategically planned to cross sector boundaries in their careers, including those who started their careers in the private sector and then moved to the public sector and those who started their careers in the public sector and then moved to the private sector.

Before I started contacting professionals, I was concerned that the time demands of their work would preclude them from participation. For that reason, I requested a shorter amount of time (30 minutes) in my initial solicitation, though most of my interviews went well beyond the allotted time frame at the request of the interviewee. My own career background, which involved handling national security issues at the U.S. State Department and executing corporate mergers and acquisitions at a global investment bank, may have also assuaged any concerns that interviewees may have had about my role as a junior researcher, both in terms of handling confidential information as well as relating to their career paths. A handful of interviewees mentioned that they had looked at my LinkedIn profile prior to our interview to see my career background in the public and private sectors.

I recruited informants from the alumni databases of an elite research university in the Northeast United States. These databases contained information such as prior job history, year of graduation and contact information. I searched the University's Master of Business Administration alumni database for early, mid-career and senior professionals who worked in the federal government; I also searched the University's Master of Public Policy and Public Administration alumni database for early, mid-career and senior sector professionals who worked for large business corporations. I collected email addresses and sent a recruiting email to 40 professionals asking them to participate in a study about people whose careers have spanned the public and the private sectors. I selected these 40 professionals based on their career stage and job histories in major Fortune 500 companies and in the U.S. federal government. I had an unexpectedly high response rate; 35 out of the 40 agreed to participate in the study and the remaining five either did not respond (n=2) or responded after I stopped collecting data (n=3). In addition to the 35 interviewees, I gained access to five senior executives through personal contacts and a recruitment email.

I sampled for professionals who had worked at the federal level of government and not the state or local level. Given the significant differences between the state and federal level for regulations governing the public-private boundary, I chose to study the public-private boundary at the federal level of U.S. government because it has significantly more stringent rules and regulations than the state or local levels regarding the disclosure of an individual's financial assets and the ethics of job searches during a career transition into and out of public service. For example, in the United States, the Ethics in Government Act mandates that presidential nominees to senior official positions in the executive branch must file a 24-page public report (OGE Form 278) of their finances and other interests outside of the government prior to Senate confirmation. In comparison, state-level requirements are less strict; for example, the state of Pennsylvania, which is typical, asks for a 4-page statement of financial interests (Form SEC-1).

I sampled for professionals who worked in large corporate businesses like the Fortune 500 or global investment banks and management consultancies. I chose major corporations – and not entrepreneurial start-ups – because I wanted to mirror the federal government's large organizational size and national scale on the corporate side.

I sampled across a range of career stages – early, mid-career and senior professionals – to gain diversity on this dimension and to learn about differences across career stages. Interviewees ranged in age from mid-twenties to seventies and were evenly split between men and women. I chose to sample across a range of ages and career stages because I wanted to make sure that the phenomenon was not an artifact of a particular cohort. The interviewee sample contained a mix between those who started their careers in the public sector and those who started in the private sector. Interviewees held American citizenship and reflected a diversity of racial and ethnic groups.

I excluded from my sample those professionals whose careers could be characterized as a "revolving door" between the federal government and business. Revolving door professionals are those who move from the public sector to the private sector to peddle their influence among government officials or to use their government expertise to craft strategies for corporations that create new or exploit existing regulatory gaps for competitive advantage. Scholars in economics and political science have questioned the motivations of these revolving door sector switchers (Adams, 1981; Lafont and Tirole, 1991; Johnson, 1983; Gormley, 1979; Cohen, 1986; Salisbury et al, 1989; Etzion and Davis, 2008) and have deemed them agents of regulatory capture, a form of political corruption that occurs when a regulatory agency is "captured" by commercial interests instead of the public good (Adams, 1981; Laffont and Tirole, 1991).

These revolving door professionals are not relevant informants for my study on boundary crossing since they are motivated by client advocacy and not public service. To exclude them from my sample, I identified potential revolving door professionals when searching in the alumni database, operationally defining them as any cross-sector professional with work experience as a lobbyist at a law firm, trade or industry association, or lobbying firm or as a corporate employee whose primary work responsibilities included lobbying. This definition reflects the fact that lobbying firms and trade associations employ the majority (63%) of Washington lobbyists (Baumgartner and Leech, 2001). I identified revolving door professionals by their resumes as executives working in "government affairs", "government relations" or "corporate affairs" in corporations; as "legislative and public policy" or "strategic communications" strategists at lobbying organizations; and as registered lobbyists for major trade and industry associations.

In total, my sample includes sixteen senior executives with over fifteen years of experience, at levels including CEO and Cabinet Secretary; twenty-one mid-career professionals with five to fifteen years in the public and private sectors, at levels including Managing Director and Chief of Staff; and three early-career professionals with less than five years of experience. These informants worked at a range of private sector organizations including top-tier management consulting firms, global investment banks, private equity firms, technology companies and Fortune 500 firms. They also worked at a range of federal government agencies including the U.S. Departments of Treasury, State, Justice, Health and Human Services and Homeland Security as well as the White House. On average, the professionals in my sample crossed sectors slightly over two times with the modal number being two sector crossings. The number of cross-overs ranged from one to a high of five.

2.2 Data Collection

The primary data for this study come from in depth, qualitative interviews with the 40 people in my sample. I conducted the interviews in various locations, including face-to-face on-site in office spaces and conference rooms and over the phone. The interviews typically lasted 60 minutes and ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours. I kept the interview protocol and a small memo pad and pen on the table to take quick notes and reminders of follow-up questions and points I wanted to raise later in the interview. I tape-recorded the interviews and transcribed them verbatim as soon as possible after the interview.

For my recordings, I used two digital recorders – a primary recorder and a back-up recorder – that I placed on the table in front of me along with my memo pad and pen. Interviewees appeared generally comfortable during the interview with a few exclaiming that they forgot the recorders were there when the interview ended. Many of them visibly relaxed into their chairs when I discussed the study's confidentiality guidelines in the first few minutes of the interview. Only two of my interviewees expressed initial hesitation with recording the interviews; both were women who initially worked in the private sector, then moved into high profile public sector positions, and had recently returned to the private sector. I emphasized that the recording and transcription would be in the hands of a limited number of researchers and that I would handle the information within my institution's strict guidelines for confidentiality. I also underscored to all of my interviewees that I could stop recording at any point at the interviewee's request. Just one professional said something was "off the record" when he described well-known national politicians. "Off the record" is a widely-used term that journalists and public affairs executives use to indicate what they are saying is not for attribution or for publication.

The interviews were semi-structured. In Spring 2014, I developed a semi-structured interview protocol with feedback from three leading qualitative researchers in the management field. I conducted the interviews in 2014 and spring 2015 with the bulk of the interviews occurring in mid-2014. I concentrated my interview questions on participants' career paths to date, asking them to detail specific career transitions into or out of the public sector (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) with a focus on why they chose to change careers, how they crossed sectors, and how they viewed and operated in the new sector. During and after each interview, I made notes on how interviewees reacted to the questions and made changes to interview questions to improve clarity. I provide the interview protocol in Appendix A.

After the interview concluded, a majority of interviewees (23 professionals) expressed interest in the study's results and asked me to remain in touch. I found the sheer number of these requests striking; one interviewee specifically mentioned a desire to understand how others successfully "talked [their] way into" a new sector.

Directly after each interviewee departed, I wrote field notes on my immediate impressions of the interview, including any details about conversation before or after the recorded interview, key themes that emerged from the interview, possible connections to other interviews, impressions of the interviewee's attitude and general appearance, and any other striking or unusual points about the interview. These field notes helped me remember details of each interviewee later during data analysis.

I had the recordings of interviews transcribed verbatim after I conducted the interview. Given the high-profile nature of some of my interviewees (e.g. former Cabinet secretaries), I carefully considered multiple transcription services and deliberately hired one sole-proprietor transcription service based locally to safeguard against leaks in information. With only one local transcriber, I could significantly limit the downside risk of information disclosure. The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement and also maintained ongoing, trusted relationships with other university researchers in the area. When I received a transcription, I immediately reviewed the document for accuracy against the recording and corrected any garbled transcription and typos. I also reviewed the transcription in tandem with my field notes from that interview. I continued conducting interviews until I reached theoretical saturation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), i.e., when the interviewees' stories started to become repetitive.

In addition to the interviews with my sample, I also conducted interviews with 12 people who play a role in recruiting, advising or facilitating a transition for people between the two sectors. This category includes college and business school career advisers in public service and business and senior personnel officials in federal government and on presidential transition teams. I conducted these interviews in offices and limited public spaces (e.g. campus conference rooms) with the intent of understanding their perspectives on boundary crossers they had advised, vetted, selected, and recruited. For these interviews, I took notes during and immediately after the sessions and transcribed verbatim when possible. I tape-recorded some, but not all, of the interviews.

I supplemented interviews with archival data collected on informants, including over 400 pages of resumes, articles and biographies found on online (e.g. LinkedIn, academic, government and private sector firm websites). I also drew on existing interview transcripts with other Cabinet-level or "C-suite" executives whose careers span the public and private sectors. These transcripts, conducted by other academics and journalists, contained rich career narratives and gave me indirect access to more senior executives. I also gathered archival documents that focused on rules governing sector crossing, including federal personnel regulations and the Office of General Ethics financial disclosure forms. These materials helped me gain a broader understanding of the boundary-crossing environment and possible constraints of political appointments in the United States.

Table 2: Data Sources

Data Source	*Quantity*
Interviews Primary interviews, secondary interviews	52 interviewees 1,000+ pages of interview transcripts
Archival Materials Personnel regulations, resumes, biographies, articles, job descriptions, Cabinet interview transcripts	400+ pages
Additional Data Preliminary interviews, recruiting and career panel observation	3 panels ~15 hours

2.3 Data Analysis – Case Studies

Since I aim to develop theory, I designed the study to allow for unexpected themes to emerge from the data. I focused on why and how people cross sector boundaries, so it made sense to employ qualitative methods for data analysis since they are well suited for questions of process (Creswell, 1998; Lee, Mitchell and Sablynski, 1999). I also sought to better understand the stories of each of the interviewees, including their motivations for crossing sector boundaries and what strategies and tactics they used in the boundary-crossing process. To that end, I wrote memos on each individual and developed a selection of seven multi-page cases that I present in Appendix B. As a supplement to the qualitative data analysis, I found these cases to be a data-rich, cohesive way to understand why and how people cross sector boundaries.

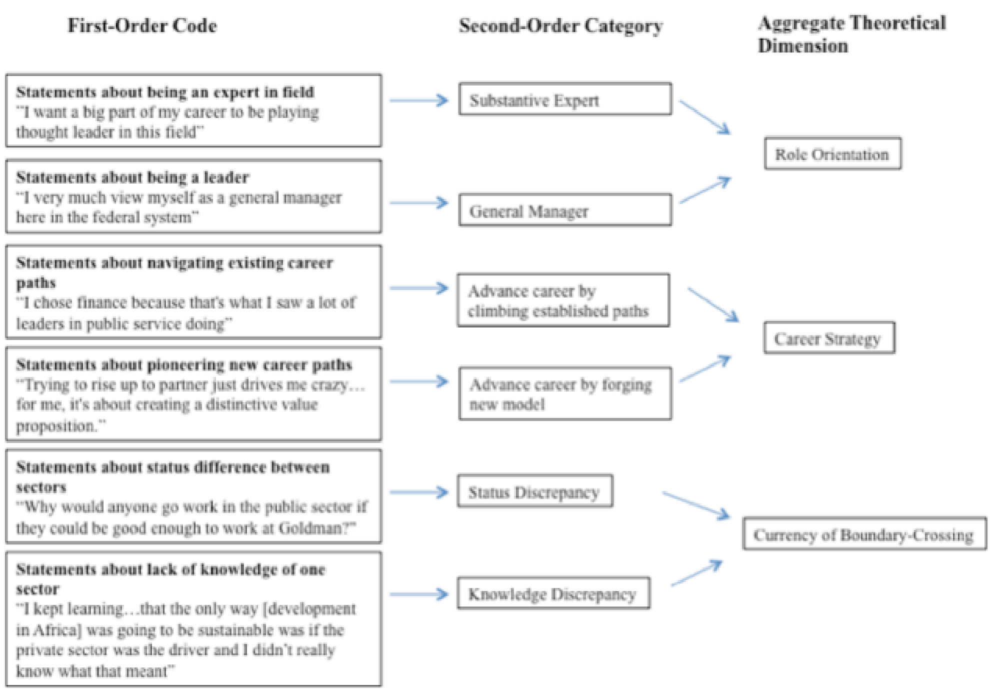
2.4 Data Analysis – Qualitative Data Analysis

Traveling iteratively between my qualitative data and emerging theory, I analyzed my data following an inductive, grounded theory process (Glaser and Strauss, 1967;

Eisenhardt, 1989). As I collected data, I wrote memos for each interview and compared initial themes across those memos.

Figure 1 illustrates how I built a visual chain of evidence from the raw data to preliminary codes, categories and dimensions using three steps. I detail these three steps below.

Figure 1: Sample of Data Analysis Using Visual Chain of Evidence



Adapted from Gioia, Price, Hamilton, and Thomas (2010)

As a first step, I read the interviews and used open coding (Locke, 2001) to identify common statements from informants about their experiences and to create provisional categories. I read each transcript, field notes and memo through two times to explore possible codes. The first time, I read printed copies and made initial markings with colored highlighters and notes on the margins with possible codes for a codebook. I also created printed visual word clouds for each interview transcript by loading these electronic transcripts into the Wordle software application to compare dominant words and phrases in each interview. The second time, I imported the documents digitally to ATLAS.ti, a computer program specializing in qualitative data analysis. While ATLAS.ti did not code the transcripts for me, it did provide some significant advantages over paper coding as codes could be named and aggregated easily across multiple interviews, allowing for themes to be more easily spotted in the data. On ATLAS.ti, I open-coded each interview transcript, employing the software's tools to search, label, highlight and give codes to sections of each interview transcript.

Following the procedures recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994), I also wrote up a contact summary form for each interview to record provisional categories. I captured themes and broad observations in memos throughout the data analysis process. After reading through the data, I noticed that interviewees had two broad approaches to how they crossed boundaries – a status-driven approach and a knowledge-driven approach. In the first approach, the themes of status, prestige and credibility continually arose as part of the boundary-crossing process. In the second approach, the themes of knowledge, problem solving and eliminating blind spots surfaced in the transcripts. From my first-order raw data, I created second-order categories reflecting these approaches.

As a second step, I combined categories through constant comparison of data to category properties and created clusters of theoretical categories (Locke, 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These categories included, for example, career strategy. I also summarized all the contact forms from "public-to-private" professionals and from "private-to-public" professionals. While some people had membership in both groups due to multiple sector switches in their careers, this consolidation allowed me to roughly compare and contrast between the two groups and make adjustments for my subsequent interviews. For example, I noticed that while some people shared a similar transition history (e.g. public-to-private sector), their reasons for crossing varied substantially.

My analysis began to revolve around two of these reasons for crossing and their related tactics for boundary crossing. I called the first perspective a *gold-star* orientation where the person sought *broad impact on society* by zig zagging up the established ladders of government and business organizations. As this gold star rose, he or she would dash between the sectors in pursuit of *specialized managerial skills* for use later on in a more senior-level position with ever widening responsibilities and realms of impact. I called the second perspective a *north star* orientation where the person sought *deep impact on a multi-faceted issue* (e.g. climate change). As this north-star professional dug deeper into the issue, he or she would cobble together a career across sectors in pursuit of *knowledge to solve a problem*. The gold-star professional aimed to be a leader and general manager; in contrast, the north-star professional sought to be a substantive expert. The orientations to these roles – general manager and substantive expert – emerged from my data.

As a third step, I moved iteratively among my data, memos and relevant literature to develop theoretical dimensions (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles and Huberman, 1994). To this end, I examined how categories related to each other and aggregated similar categories to develop theoretical dimensions. Once I had constructed a possible theory, I returned to my data to assess its fit with the emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967;

Locke, 2001). I also conducted member checks with other "public-private" professionals (n=11) in federal government to assess the motivational aspect of my emerging theory and related sampling strategy. A member check is used to check the interviewer's interpretation of the transcripts (Lee, Mitchell, and Sablynski, 1999) and is done through the presentation of the study to additional "members" – i.e. people not in the sample who are similar to the people in the study's sample.

CHAPTER 3

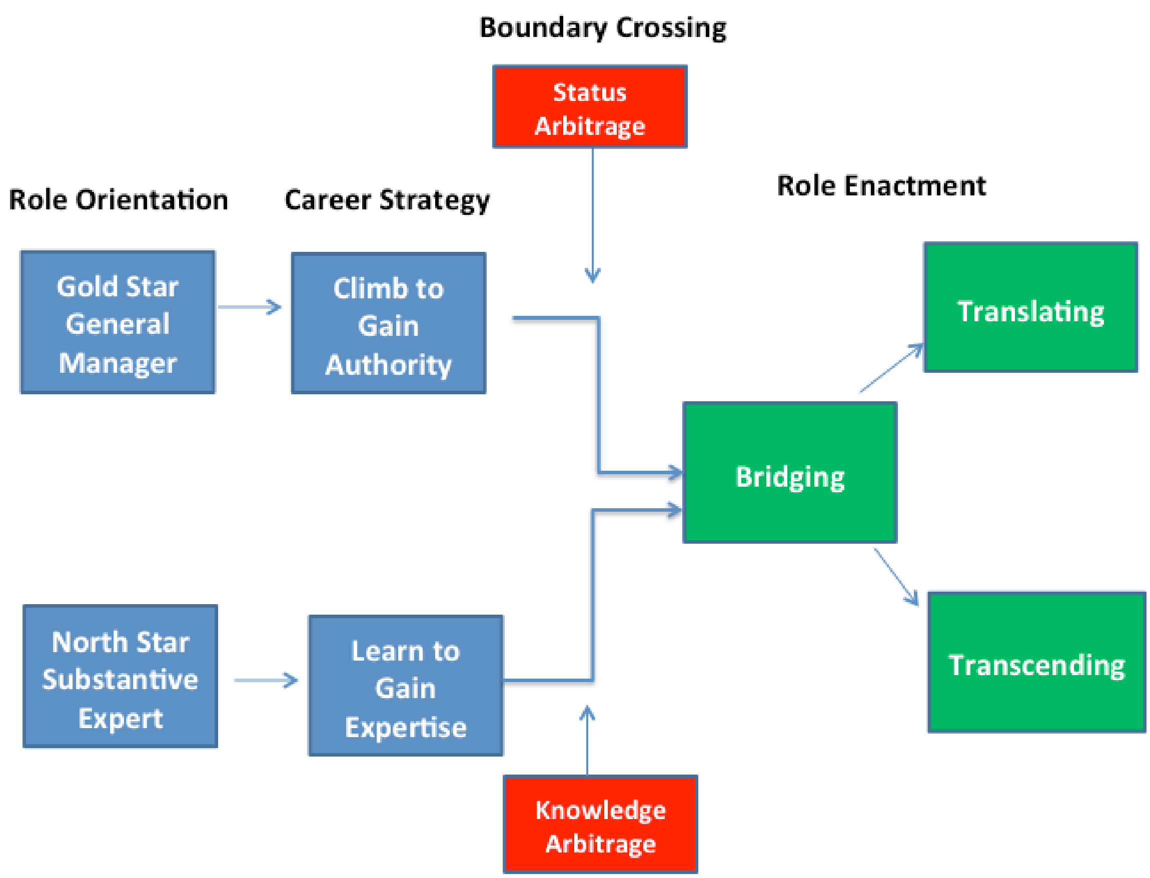
RESULTS: A MODEL FOR BOUNDARY CROSSING

This chapter presents my findings on why and how people cross sector boundaries. I first introduce a model for boundary crossing and then give an overview of the two role orientations – gold star and north star – that emerged from my data. Next, I provide a comparative analysis of professionals who have these two role orientations, including distinctly different career strategies and network structures, and discuss the currency each group of professional uses in efforts to legitimize claims for the sector crossing through a strategy of arbitrage. The chapter closes with discussion of three post-crossing adaptation behaviors.

3.1 The ROAR Model for Boundary Crossing

For boundary-crossing events, my data suggests that professionals go through a process of how they narrate their role orientation (RO), including why they cross sectors and their career strategy; how they tell their sector crossing story to claim legitimacy as part of an arbitrage (A) boundary-crossing strategy; and finally, how they enact their role (R) after crossing sectors. Based on my data, I present this *ROAR* model of boundary crossing in Figure 2. As Figure 2 suggests, the first piece of the ROAR model presents a two star framework – the gold star vs. the north star – to explain the different role orientations, including career motivations and career advancement strategies, for each group of sector crossers. This star framework drives the second piece of the model – how people move across sectors. This process involves how people use currency (e.g. status or knowledge) to successfully craft a story of legitimacy, i.e., status arbitrage or knowledge arbitrage, that allows them to cross sectors. The final piece of the model examines role enactment, i.e., how people take up their roles after they cross sectors. In this chapter, I first discuss the differences among public-private professionals and then walk through the model in the following sections: role orientation, arbitrage and the boundary-crossing process, and role enactment.

Figure 2: A Model for Boundary Crossing



3.2 Role Orientation

Why do people cross sectors? In my data, I found that all sector-crossers want to have an impact, but the way they construct what impact means to them is different. Two distinct purposes for crossing sectors emerged from the data. I used a two-star-type framework – the gold star and the north star – to explain the dimensions of difference between these sector crossers. These differences fundamentally stemmed from divergent role orientations – i.e. who the professional was, how the work was done, and who the audience was. Professionals with a gold-star role orientation aimed to be general managers who work to help the broader society. In comparison, professionals with a north-star role orientation aimed to be substantive experts who work to solve a target problem. The gold-star and north star role orientations differed in who the professional was (general manager role versus substantive expert role), how the work was done (to help versus to solve) and who the audience was (general public versus specific problem). The role orientations diverged most prominently with the target audience; the gold star had a broad target for impact, the general public, and wanted to do good for people by gaining more and more authority while north star had a specific target for impact, the societal problem, and wanted to do good by gaining more and more expertise to solve their particular animating problem (see Table 3). From these two role orientations, everything else flowed – including how people crossed sectors and how people behaved after crossing sectors. These two purposes for crossing sectors were unevenly distributed among my informants—27 gold stars and 13 north stars–and appeared independent of which direction they crossed, in which sector they started out, their age and their gender. I found a few instances of people moving from wanting to make a broad impact to a deep impact, but found no instances of people moving from wanting to make a deep impact to a broad impact.

Table 3: Gold star vs. North Star Role Orientation

Gold star	North Star
"I very much view myself as a general manager here in the federal system….you need to be in a position of authority if you're going to have an impact." - Edward "The experience in DC definitely whetted my appetite to go back into public service at some point. I think the next time that I will go back will probably be an elected office, rather than working as an appointed official…I want to be the decision maker, not just be close to the decision maker." - Kelly "I've been looking just for operations roles, like as a VP of operations, or a COO…I don't really feel very passionately about those industries, but I [need] to go out of government and come back in at a higher level, much higher level, to be able to make any kind of positive change." - Bonnie	"Basically I've always had a really, really deep and specific passion on Africa. I can't get more specific than that…I've been just very interested in issues in and topics on or related to Africa [and] that got me exploring different things that I could do over there [in Africa] professionally. And I didn't know what that was, whether it was the nonprofit sector or the business sector or government." - Christian "I just got very, very engaged in the idea of being able to drive economic growth. Nobody else from the business community had these experiences [working with government officials on an economic development grant] and these ideas and understood the power of clustering small businesses...I had a thought about what to do [to create jobs] that seemed to be new and different." - Mary

Gold stars. Gold-star professionals focused on having broad impact through a general desire to help society and serve the public. For example, Evan started out in the private sector as a management consultant and then moved to the White House to advise on economic affairs, describing "his contribution" as helping to "change the world":

> Both of my parents have had personal illnesses [and] it crystallized the idea of you should think very seriously about what your life's work is going to be and what you're contribution is going to be…you have a finite amount of time here and you should be fairly deliberate and thoughtful about what you want to do with it and how you want to change the world [for the better].

Another gold star, Annie, who started out in the White House and then moved to investment banking, wanted to see the broader picture of how government worked:

> The reason that I wanted to get into [finance] was because of this broader picture. I saw how important it was for cities and states and municipalities to be funded, and that that's how real work got done. Like if they didn't have the funding, then they wouldn't be able to exist.

Sam offered a third gold star example. He started working in refugee camps in Africa for a U.S. foreign aid agency and then crossed to the private sector as an investment banker in order to gain skills and "help out" those in need. He explained:

> I was working in a refugee camp [and] was always very interested in the public sector, but realized how difficult it was, the bureaucratic challenges that persisted, and I wasn't convinced I [could] make an impact going initially into it…I took an opportunity in investment banking…my whole goal was to leverage those private side skills to figure out how to improve inefficiencies on the public side…simply put, to help them out, simply put.

Like Evan and Annie, Sam did not specify a specific issue that he was trying to solve; rather, his desire for broad impact was about a laudable but vague goal of "improving inefficiencies on the public side." Their gold-star role orientations were not tied to the direction of their sector crossing; Evan crossed from the private to the public sector whereas Sam and Annie crossed from the public to the private sector. In these gold star examples, Sam, Annie and Evan were primarily focused on getting a "broad picture" and helping make change on a wide, societal scale.

North stars. In contrast with gold-star professionals' broad service to the general public, north-star professionals sought to solve a specific problem. For example, Christian started at the Treasury Department working on Africa issues, then moved to management consulting in Africa and then became a senior Africa policymaker in a U.S. foreign aid agency. Christian had an intense, life-long passion to solve the problem of

African economic development. At each turn of his career, he had single-mindedly pursued this puzzle from as many angles as he could. He described the origins of his career as follows:

> Basically I've always had a really, really deep and specific passion on Africa. I can't get more specific than that. I mean literally since I was in high school, I've been just very interested in issues in and topics on or related to Africa. And so when I was an undergrad, that got me exploring different things that I could do over there [in Africa] professionally. And I didn't know what that was, whether it was the nonprofit sector or the business sector or government.

Another north-star professional, Mary, described the impact she wanted to have on job creation. Mary started as a venture capital investor, then moved to a Cabinet position focused on business creation, and then became a thought leader on the issue of promoting job creation. Mary explained:

> I just got very, very engaged in the idea of being able to drive economic growth. Nobody else from the business community had these experiences [working with government officials on an economic development grant] and these ideas and understood the power of clustering small businesses...I had a thought about what to do [to create jobs] that seemed to be new and different.

In these north-star examples, both Christian and Mary focused on solving a complex problem – African development and job creation. As north-star professionals, their target for impact was the problem, not a specific audience or public. Their north-star role orientations had greater prominence than the direction of their sector crossing; Christian crossed from the public to the private sector whereas Mary crossed from the private to the public sector.

3.3 Career Strategy

Gold-star and north-star professionals differed in how they talked about their careers and career advancement. These “star” role orientations influenced their career strategy and how they planned to rise as leaders.

Gold stars. The gold-star professionals crossed sectors to become general managers so they could gain a wide scope of authority. Gold stars said they aspired to be “general managers”, “leaders”, and “generals” and did not want to get locked into a specific career option or specialized career path. Stan, a mid-career gold-star professional who had crossed sectors once from the White House to a prestigious management consulting company, described this general manager career strategy as seeking a combination of “operational experience” and “management learnings” to open doors between sectors. When asked what specific skills he hoped to gain, he said:

> The skills that I want are leadership and management skills that make people think of me in a way that says, wow, he'd be a great leader for any organization, public or private.

Gold-star professional Edward, who started as a management consultant, then moved to an urban development agency, returned to management consulting work, and then became a senior official at a federal consumer finance agency, explained his strategy of developing core skills in the private sector early on before returning to government as a general manager:

> I needed to be able to develop [a core set of technical business] skills and refine them in the management consulting context with a certain level of competence…and then I wanted to take those [skills] and deploy them in the public sector. I very much view myself as a general manager here in the federal system. So when I think about that value proposition and that skill set, I don't necessarily see myself as an industry vertical specialist…instead I view myself as a generalist.

Gold-star professionals sought to build legitimacy through prestigious work experiences (e.g. work on Wall Street) that signaled gold star excellence to a wide audience as they moved between sectors. Gold stars were particularly drawn to the prestige of long-established institutions in each sector (e.g. the White House, McKinsey), using recognizable brand names as a signal of legitimacy. Gold-star professional Yael, for example, first started out at KKR, a prestigious private equity firm, and became a White House policymaker, but was reluctant to let go of the sense of legitimacy she derived from her private-sector "gold star" affiliation:

> I have thought about what would it mean to do private equity now, have a good name on my resume, [so if working in the public sector] didn't work out, I [at least] worked for KKR …so I'm legit. That's coming back to the brand names…having the brand from [KKR] and [elite undergraduate and graduate schools] and all of that helps me feel a little bit more secure.

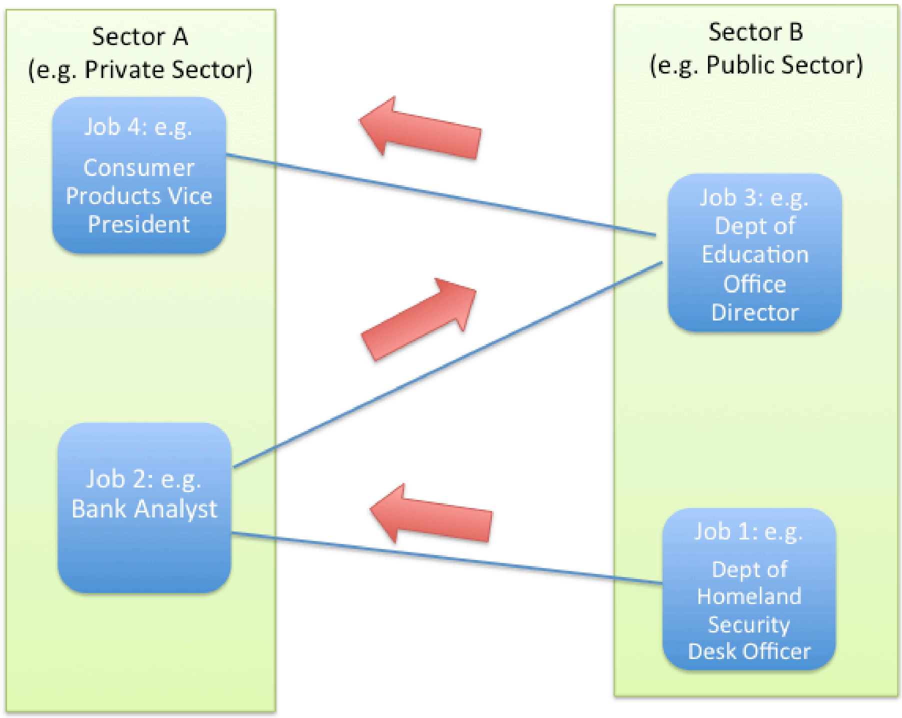
Gold-star professional Thomas, who started in an economic development agency and then became a management consultant, moved in the opposite direction in order to gain the legitimacy he lacked. At the agency, most of the senior officials came from elite management consulting firms and Wall Street banks. Their views galvanized Thomas to cross sectors:

> I was in an area [of government] where people all had the same opinion, and that was that private-sector experience is really, really important. And so my boss would tell…me things like, oh, you're the highest-performing project manager [and] your bonus is the highest, but honestly…would I hire you to be the head of long-term planning? I wouldn't. Because you don't have that pedigree [experience in private sector].

Both Yael and Thomas sought legitimacy through brand names and pedigree to signal a level of competence that was credible to a wide audience. Despite their shared career strategy, these gold star examples differed in the direction of their sector crossing with two professionals (Stan and Thomas) crossing from the public sector to the private sector and two professionals (Edward and Yael) crossing from the private sector to the public sector.

While these gold-star professionals may have been interested in specific issues, their primary concern was to attain power and influence through a senior position (like a soldier aims for a general's gold star rank) where they could make a difference helping others on a systemic scale from a position of authority. Figure 3 presents the career trajectory associated with gold-star professionals. Gold-star professionals moved up well-institutionalized paths of career advancement in each sector, zig-zagging their way up the two established structures over the course of their career. Their path typically crossed over multiple issue and industry communities (e.g. homeland security and education, finance and consumer products). The critical point was that wherever they moved in the public sector or private sector, the gold stars were climbing upwards in authority.

Figure 3: Gold Star – Climbing Career Trajectory



As they climbed, gold-star professionals sought ever higher-level positions with increasing authority. While the examples above highlight the importance of prestige, gold-star professionals were also heavily focused on authority. For example, gold-star professional Edward started in management consulting, then went to an urban development agency, returning to management consulting before joining a federal consumer finance agency. He explained his aim for a senior position:

> [After my previous stint in government, I said] I would only come back into the public sector if I could have a top-level job where I could have a true, disproportionate, meaningful impact, [and] you need to be in a position of authority if you're going to have an impact.

Gold-star professional Bonnie started as an economic consultant in the private sector, then moved to the Department of Justice, and sought a job in the private sector with more authority, so she could make "positive change" in government in the future:

> My goal [in this move] is to be a COO. That's really what I would like to do. So I feel like I need to go out and experience that in the private sector so I can bring those lessons back to government. So I've tried to figure out what industry or sector to be in…however, I'm pretty open right now. I've been looking just for operations roles, like as a VP of operations, or a COO of operations across sectors. I've been looking in finance and looking in general manufacturing. I don't really feel very passionately about those industries, but I [need] to go out of government and come back in at a higher level, much higher level, to be able to make any kind of positive change.

Bonnie's primary goal was attaining a high level position (e.g., COO) in the private sector; unlike a north star's strong issue focus, Bonnie was agnostic as to which industry to join or which societal problem to tackle. Another gold-star professional, Kathy, also focused on attaining a high status position to gain authority. While Edward and Bonnie alluded in their interviews to making impact in top appointed positions, Kathy set her sights on elected office. Kathy started in finance and then moved to the Treasury Department and then became a corporate strategist. Kathy described her future:

> The experience in DC definitely whetted my appetite to go back into public service at some point. And I think the next time that I will go back will probably be an elected office, rather than working as an appointed official…I want to be the decision maker, not just be close to the decision maker.

In her comments above, Kathy seemed focused on attaining a high status position, governor of a large U.S. state, with significant power and decision-making authority. Gold-star professionals like Kathy built credibility in both sectors through prestigious, brand name work experiences and climbed established structures to high-level positions in order to increase their authority and impact. For gold-star professionals, their power to have an impact on society comes from their position; the higher they rise, the wider the scope of their authority and the greater their impact.

North stars. In contrast to gold-star professionals' generic public service purpose, north-star professionals oriented themselves around one north-star issue (e.g. climate change) and sought to leverage knowledge and community across sectors to solve this complex problem. While these north-star professionals often sought to have society-wide impact, they were primarily oriented towards a specific societal problem and aimed to marshal resources across sectors to solve that problem. Acting like a journeyman guided by a north star, they cobbled together a career around a north-star issue regardless of sector in an effort to learn. Figure 4 presents the learning-oriented career trajectory associated with north-star professionals. This trajectory is an upward spiral, which Figure 5 presents as viewed from above. The north-star professionals moved around different nodes of the same issue-based community, spiraling their way up around the central problem and learning about the problem from multiple vantage points over the course of their career.

Figure 4: North Star – Learning Career Trajectory (Top View)

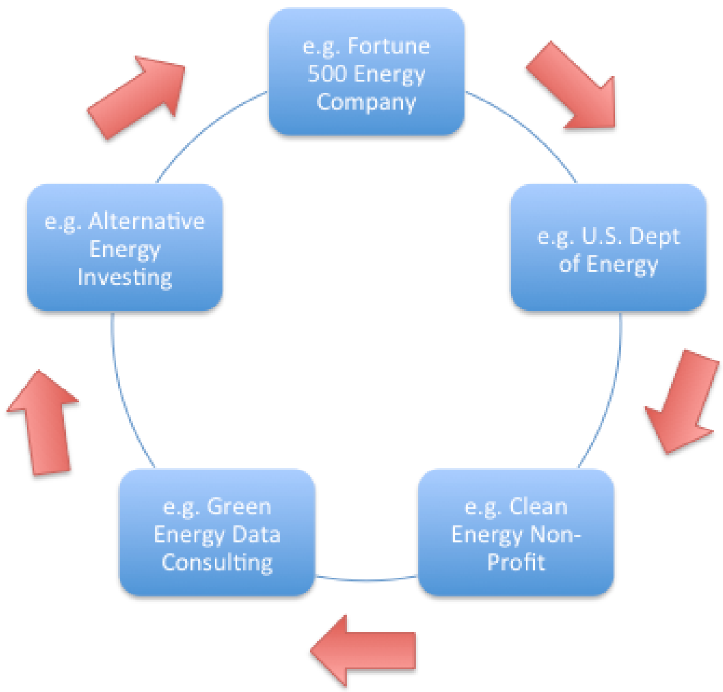
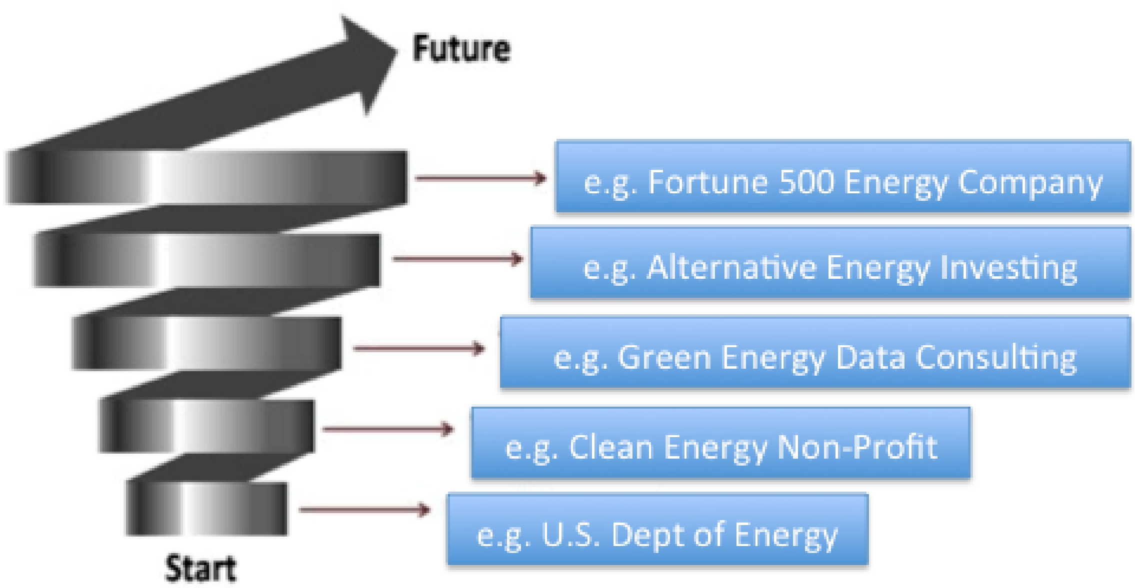


Figure 5: North Star – Learning Career Trajectory (Side View)



As they spiraled, north-star professionals sought positions with that would help them develop greater and greater knowledge so they could develop their deep expertise. North-star professional Christian described a turning point in his career when he got the chance to learn from a move to the private sector:

> I finally met this director…who was all about working with large multinational agriculture companies like Monsanto and getting them to start thinking very differently about their business models and their operations, particularly in Africa…we morphed that into work that we started doing at the World Economic Forum and started to work with African governments directly, and a lot of thinking on really out-of-the box public/private partnerships and so on. And so I just really loved it because I was able to really marry these two interests together and do something practical on the ground. That's what changed everything. Because now all of a sudden I was understanding big businesses differently, and getting governments to think differently about big businesses, and all that. And everyone was winning. This was not social CSR type stuff.

Another north-star professional, Matthew, had a life-long interest in economic productivity and served as an economist first in academia, then a policy think tank, then a management consulting firm, and finally in the White House. Matthew described his own career advancement through knowledge:

> I taught economics at [a Northeast university] for a while, and then I came down to [a Washington DC think tank] because it's much more [policy-oriented]…I decided to join [the consulting firm] for about a year. In terms of what motivated me to make that move, I…had been drawn into a project that [the consulting firm] was doing on a topic that I was interested in, which is productivity – what affects the productivity of the economy, and how it grows, and differences among countries…I got interested in what they were doing and realized that there was stuff that they knew about how the economy worked that I didn't…and then I got a call to see if I was interested in joining the White House [economic team]. And that was something long-term I had wanted to do, getting the government view on [productivity].

In describing his career path, Matthew focused on positions where he could learn, gain expertise, and develop a greater understanding of economic productivity through knowledge accumulation in the policy, academic, and business realms.

These north-star professionals became leaders by developing their expertise around their focal issue. North-star professional Mary, whose issue was job creation, started as a venture capitalist and then moved to a Cabinet position for business ventures. Her expertise opened the door for her to join government to work on her focal issue, job creation:

> The way I got to Washington was [a think tank] came and did a study [on the cluster project] and then they asked if I would write a paper on clusters. And the issue was, what is the federal role in regional economic clusters? What should the federal government be doing? So I found this very interesting…that paper came out. And because of that, in a variety of ways, someone noticed and asked me to come on the transition team after the President won. [How were you recruited to the Cabinet?] It was because of that paper…[I did] no fundraising. No nothing. It was expertise. I had not met the President except for once, like for a 30 second handshake, you know.

Mary gained legitimacy through her expertise and the diverse community she brought together of business executives and government officials. After successfully spearheading a grant project on job creation in her home state, people in both business and government started to become interested in Mary's ideas:

> People began to ask me, could I be involved in figuring out how to create a cluster strategy or an economic development strategy for other parts of [the state]? So I developed an idea that, if clusters were going to work in [the state] for boats, what else did we have? So the public official put [cluster grants] into the budget. And people said, what is this? We don't understand it. And they said, you have to bring somebody up here who can explain what clusters are to the caucus. And I said, what's a caucus? No idea. So I am now learning about government. And this was my initiation…this experience [allowed me to] follow an interest that I had about creating jobs [and] understand the intricacies of the legislative process.

Mary continued to push for job creation after she left government and continued as a thought leader on the topic on a global stage:

> The theme that I'm doing [in my career] is job creation. I'm going to the UK because they want to create a [job creation agency] at the cabinet level…I would like to continue to be a public voice on the economy, growth, and job creation.

In short, Mary first became a leader through her expertise, not because she has attained a position of power through traditional routes (e.g. fundraising for the President). As a businesswoman, she sought to learn about government (e.g. caucusing) to help solve her focal problem of job creation. Her authority stemmed from her ideas on economic development and the multi-sector community that rallied around her ideas.

In sum, north-star professionals oriented themselves around solving a specific complex problem and crossed boundaries to gain more knowledge and understanding of the root causes of the problem. North-star professionals' authority stemmed from their expertise. As people bought into their strategic vision, the north stars became elevated as leaders of a cohesive, multi-sector community focused on the societal problem. While they shared this problem-based focus, these north-star professionals crossed in different directions with some examples (e.g. Mary and Matthew) moving from private sector positions into the public sectors and others (e.g. Christian) crossing from public sector to private sector.

3.4 Boundary-Crossing Strategy: Narratives and Arbitrage

Gold-star and north-star professionals pursued unconventional, less institutionalized careers paths in comparison to other public-private professionals, such as revolving door professionals. Since their career paths were counter-stereotypical and poorly understood, gold-star and north-star professionals had to explain their sector crossing to gatekeepers and community members to gain entry to a sector. Narratives became a key vehicle through which these professionals enhanced or preserved their legitimacy in their bid to cross sectors. In this section, I discuss the role of narratives in boundary crossing and introduce the concept of *arbitrage*, a narrative-based boundary-crossing strategy that occurs at the time of the crossing. When engaging in arbitrage, professionals claimed currencies, like institutional status or issue-based knowledge, to craft a compelling story of legitimate value creation for the new sector.

Boundary-Crossing Narratives. In my data, I found narratives played a key role in the boundary-crossing strategy. According to scholars, narratives have a few distinct features. They are temporal, have a plot line, and revolve around a central message (May, 2002). For the boundary-crossing process, both gold star and north-star professionals engaged in strategic storytelling – typically through an interview process – to convince sector gatekeepers and community members to let them cross the boundary. These narratives intentionally revolved around central messages of legitimacy since the professionals had to persuade the listener to understand their unusual career paths and reasons for crossing sectors. These narratives were not neutral objects, but instead were tailored to reflect their environment, including social relations (e.g. status differences between sectors). One gold-star professional who had crossed sectors four times from public to private sectors argued that only some professionals could successfully craft and deliver these narratives credibly to gatekeepers:

> I don't think that everyone has the [rhetorical] building blocks to be able to tell that [sector crossing] story, or is able to pull it all together to make [the career path] sound reasonable.

Indeed, boundary-crossing narratives hinged on the storyteller's ability to persuade the listener of the "reasonableness" of the public-private career; narratives could also be used to argue for reshaping the strategic vision of the organization (e.g. arguing that an organization needed a leader who understands the community instead of an expert on manufacturing).

Arbitrage. Arbitrage is a narrative based strategy for boundary crossing where professionals craft and tell a story about the value he or she will create for the organization. In finance, arbitrage is the practice of taking advantage of a difference in valuation between two markets and profiting off the difference. I apply this arbitrage analogy to public-private boundary crossing and argue that there is an arbitrage opportunity when crossing boundaries because the professionals can take advantage of a difference in valuation between the public and private sectors.

When they crossed sectors, professionals drew from their individual experience (e.g. what I know and can do) and institutional status (e.g. McKinsey or the White House). Their individual experience included their general managerial capabilities and their issue-based knowledge. All three assets – status, knowledge and general managerial skills – could be considered *currencies* for boundary crossing. Drawing from these currencies, professionals strategically crafted a narrative to claim authority to cross sectors. Depending on which direction they cross, they claimed a combination of knowledge, institutional status and general managerial capabilities. A professional could be high in knowledge and high in status as well. At its core, the concept of arbitrage was this claim of value creation.

Status Arbitrage. Status arbitrage is a narrative based strategy where the gold-star professional tells a story about the value he or she will create for the organization. Status arbitrage occurred when gold-star professionals claimed institutional status as a currency when presenting their story to gatekeepers for their validation and acceptance.

Gold-star professionals were attentive to status and viewed the private sector as higher status than the public sector, consistent with the rest of society. When crossing sectors, gold stars focused on how they could preserve or enhance their status with the career move. Gold-star professionals were preoccupied with status because if they lost status, they would lose the possibility of increasing the scope of their authority. This loss was critical as their sense of impact depended on how much authority they wielded.

Moving from high status to low status sector, gold-star professionals could claim both their managerial expertise and their institutional status. The gold star's narrative underwent less scrutiny because they came from a known institution (e.g. Citibank). The gold-star professional recognized his or her high status and built a narrative around institutional status (e.g. the high caliber people at Citibank) and the value he or she would bring to the organization. Gold-star professionals could also mention managerial skills or issue-based knowledge, but the primary element to the narrative was the institutional status. For example, a gold-star professional engaged in status arbitrage when she claimed to be a great general manager in government because she performed excellently in private sector at prestigious company. One gold-star professional, Ruth, discussed how she crossed from consumer giant Nestle to a U.S. law enforcement agency:

> [In my interviews] I leverage my experience [and say] because I come from a place like Nestle, I know how things should work in an ideal world and function well...I can see a gap [in performance between the public and private sectors] there.

Gold-star professionals moving from private to the public sector noticed how government welcomed people with brand name private sector experience. Edward, a gold-star professional who moved from consulting to a consumer finance agency, acknowledged that:

> Rightly or wrongly, and through no work of my own, more through luck [and] just by virtue of where I sit, I think that the brand halo effect shines well on me when moving.

As evidence of this halo effect, some gold-star professionals pointed to how quickly they could obtain jobs. One gold-star professional, Steve, who moved from finance into the Treasury Department said it took "maybe 48 hours" from the time he expressed interest in the job to actually getting the job offer:

> [Coming from finance] I was sort of intrigued as to what was going on in DC …I basically went down there, and I ended up having a meeting with [the Treasury official in charge of hiring]…and they gave me a job offer at the end of the day.

While people could claim institutional status when moving from the private sector to the public sector, making this claim had downsides that brought potential tension to these boundary crossings. For example, one downside to using status arbitrage was that gold-star professionals were expected to know far more than they actually did and faced resentment from colleagues based on the private sector stereotypes they represented.

Moving from low status to high status sector, gold-star professionals claimed their managerial expertise, but not institutional status. Without the halo of institutional status, the professional's narrative underwent more scrutiny (e.g. having to answer additional questions, doing additional interviews). One gold-star professional, Naomi, who crossed sectors twice – first from private to public and then back to private – talked about how "easy" her first move from a private equity firm to the Treasury Department was; in comparison, she faced a barrage of skeptical questions in her public-to-private transition from the Treasury Department to a Fortune 500 company and had to explain how she would create value for the firm through her skills:

> When I was interviewing to come back into the private sector, I had to be able to explain why did I go to the public sector? And what did I work on? What did I learn? Why is that a great, unique, differentiated skill that I now have that makes me even more attractive a hire back into the private sector?

In these high scrutiny interviews, the gold-star professional recognized his or her low status and had to sanitize any indicators of her low status and danger he or she may have posed to the organization. In their narratives, they stripped out any mention of government and emphasized their strong management credentials. For example, Bonnie, a mid-career public sector official at the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and a former economic consultant in the private sector, had crossed sector boundaries once over the course of her career and planned to cross back to the private sector within a few months. In her interviews, she explained her government experience to prospective private sector employers using business-oriented language:

> I really try to keep the government out of it and try to talk about it in terms of operations and the type of business success that I've had, efficiencies that I've been able to push through, even with the bureaucracy that you have in government. So I try to frame my experience as being about like high-level strategic advisory services and operations to try and get it to be something they understand.

In her boundary-crossing interviews, Bonnie sanitized her narrative to private sector gatekeepers and heavily emphasized her claim of portable managerial experiences in "advisory services and operations" from her current job.

Knowledge Arbitrage. Arbitrage also served as a useful framework to examine knowledge transitions. North-star professionals were attentive to knowledge gain and engaged in *knowledge arbitrage* whereby they used knowledge as a legitimacy claim to gain access to a sector (e.g. claim to be an expert in productivity and would bring that knowledge to government). Knowledge arbitrage occurs in both directions –from the public sector to the private sector or the private sector to the public sector – because there is valuable information in both sectors; the north-star professional is attentive to the gain in new knowledge relative to his or her existing knowledge of the focal problem. To gain access to the sector, north-star professionals told a boundary-crossing story with a central message of expertise and knowledge to claim legitimacy to gatekeepers; the status of the sector did not affect their narrative or their career decision-making. North-star professional Erin started in a foreign aid agency and moved to management consulting and is now at the U.S. State Department. She described her "organic" move from her international development consulting firm into the State Department based on her "in-depth" knowledge on development issues:

> I led up our North America/South America region…and we were selected [by the State Department] to do a big review of US government's investments in Haiti. And we did a very in-depth review. We spent a lot of time down there, and had a big team working on it and then worked some more with [a senior State Department official] on other [development] issues, and that's when the Secretary asked me to come on as the senior advisor for his government…it was [pretty] organic… after we'd worked together for some time, she [the Department official] indicated that an opportunity could be there to come on board…I said I was really prepared...I'd just spent the last eight years working in institutions [looking] at those issues.

In this example of knowledge arbitrage, Erin claims expertise in her boundary-crossing narrative to get from management consulting to the State Department.

When crossing, north-star professionals consider how much they will learn and gain additional knowledge with the move. North-star professionals are frustrated with blind spots in knowledge and unsatisfied with a single sector's limited point of view. In their drive to learn about their issue, they act to remedy these blind spots and limitations by crossing boundaries. North-star professional Christian, who started at the Treasury Department and then moved to management consulting in Africa and is now at a U.S. foreign aid agency, realized he had a blind spot in his understanding of Africa and crossed sectors to get "both sides of the story":

> While I was in Treasury, I kept learning more and more that development, particularly in Africa, the only way this was going to be sustainable was if the private sector was the driver. And I didn't really know what that meant. So I figured I really ought to. And so that kind of inspired me to actually put everything on hold and go to grad school and get my joint degree (MBA/MPA). I really got excited by understanding both sides of the story.

North-star professionals are focused on knowledge gain because if they lose knowledge (which can include knowledge depreciation for staying put), they lose the possibility of understanding and solving their focal problem. This loss is important as their sense of impact depends on how much expertise they have. Expertise is a source of power and how north-star professionals legitimize themselves.

Status is largely absent from north-star crossing narratives, save for an occasional mention of prestigious firms and institutions (e.g. McKinsey, White House) as part of their career histories. North-star professionals serve in high-status organizations but prestige is not their motivating factor when deciding to cross sectors. For example, one north-star professional Jack, who focused on high school computer science education, considered crossing from the Department of Education to McKinsey but only if he could work in McKinsey's educational practice. He also considered jobs in Silicon Valley at ed tech startups, at the Gates Foundation as a education program manager, and as a computer science lecturer for a massive open online course (MOOC). While he appreciated McKinsey's strong brand name, Jack cared more about understanding how to popularize computer science education in school districts and less about gaining prestigious experience to be a general manager.

3.5 Role Enactment: Adaptation Behavior After Boundary Crossing

Both gold star and north-star professionals adapted to their new roles by *bridging* elements of both sectors. In my data, I found two types of bridging adaptation behavior – *translating* and *transcending* – that are related to each star professional. After crossing sectors, the gold-star professionals adapted by *translating* ideas from one sector to fit the other sector context and identifying synergistic opportunities such as public-private partnerships. When *translating*, the gold-star professionals remained embedded in the sector boundary and spanned the structural hole between the two sectors as a broker. By comparison, the north-star professionals adapted by *transcending* sector boundaries to view problems holistically and drew together a multi-sector community around their issue.

Translating. As people cross the boundary from one sector to another, some gold stars notice differences between the sectors and choose to "translate" their existing knowledge in one sector to make it understandable to the other sector. For example, a senior male executive who moved from government labor relations to a Wall Street financial firm discussed how be brought his mediating skills from the public sector into the private sector:

> I had the reputation for being good at moderating diverse groups of people and bringing them toward a consensus of some kind of action or resolution to whatever the issue was…[this Fortune 500 firm] needed somebody who, from the perch of the senior advisor to them, would in effect be their facilitator, moderator, bringing them to a point of view of how to deal with the problem or problems in a

> constructive way, when they started out shouting at each other. Maybe not literally all the time, but sometimes. And I had done a lot of that [in government].

Gold star sector crossers are also able to translate between sectors and serve as valuable interpreters and filters for one side to another. For example, Patrick, a gold-star professional who has crossed sectors three times, most recently from a management consulting firm to a strategy position at a federal regulator, explained his business background came in handy when large corporations would use business arguments in negotiations with regulators:

> Often the kind of argument that people will make [in merger reviews] is that, if you don't approve my merger, then horrible things will happen to the business and the industry, and the sector will collapse. Therefore you have to approve my merger, even if it's maybe not necessarily in the public interest or not necessarily aligned with antitrust laws. And being able to have a perspective on the [business] value drivers and the profitability in industry and being able to say, well, you know, actually that's not really true. Even if we turn down your merger, everything you said will happen is probably not true…that [business knowledge] is particularly important. Because otherwise it's hard to tell. I mean if someone comes and says, if you do X, you will destroy a bunch of jobs and companies will go bankrupt and so on and so forth, that's a pretty powerful rhetorical argument and I think it makes people, reasonably so, somewhat nervous. I mean you don't want to be kind of the bureaucrat who causes the collapse of industries, right? And so being able to tell when that's true and when it's not true is helpful.

Translating requires the gold star to act akin to a trader, bringing information and perspectives from one sector to another and back. The following example illustrates how a public sector executive engaged in translating when he moved to the private sector. Dan, a senior executive who crossed sectors from the White House to a Fortune 500 company, described how he became a bridge between the business world's perspective on manufacturing and the government's perspective on community engagement. He explained that executives get "locked into a way of doing things and a mindset" that is "hard to think beyond" sometimes:

> The experience of having worked in the government gave me a very unique perch and voice in senior management at [a global manufacturing firm doing mergers and acquisitions] because every single other person…had a very similar set of skills and a very similar world view…and were not particularly adept at dealing with things beyond the factory walls. And a lot of our biggest business problems…had to do with the mismatch between this very internally focused manufacturing concept and the external world…it became more and more apparent that many of our business problems have to do with some issue in the community, issue in the press, or some combination of the two.

He shared a specific story of a time when his bridging behavior helped identify a major problem and develop an out-of-the-box solution. He worked for a Fortune 500 that ran into difficulty expanding a chemical plant:

> We wanted to expand the plant…we changed the way in which we're processing the [chemicals] to get more what they call yield out of the process, and in doing so, created a new odor…and typically these plants don't have a strong odor, but this made a slightly more of like a paper mill type odor. And you know, people got worried [that the odor] was making them sick. There was a lot of coverage in the press. And the engineers basically fixed the problem…[but] they really didn't address the public's perception of the issue…what they really needed to do was listen to the community, let them see what they've done, explain it to a non-engineering mindset, and really engage with the community a different way, not just lecture them and tell them, stop complaining, it's fixed…I did a bunch of things, but one of the things I did was I worked with the CEO to replace the guy who was running the operation there to someone who had much more of a human touch. And then we brought in someone from the [government] who basically ran it a little bit more like you run a political campaign. Because we wanted to expand this plant, we need to change the mindset of the people…and folks had done the right thing on the technical front. They just hadn't really explained themselves very well…they approached the town as though it were like a plant….but that was the thrust of what we had to do: just how to approach it more like you'd approach human beings, rather than a mine.

Gold-star professional Yael who started in investment banking and then moved to the White House commented that single sector professionals might not "see" the bridges between sectors:

> What I like about this intersectoral career path that I'm trying to carve is that I'm trying to do something that I think other people might see the same things and not necessarily bridge them…I'd like to think is that me and the other people who worked on [expanding] this [public-private partnership between an investment bank and

> public sector agency] saw we could be making something here…we should have a program that does this and we should have senior guys working on this. And I'd like to think that [bridging] wouldn't necessarily happen otherwise.

These cases suggest there may be an upside to having a diverse job history. Translating can serve as a way to bring together diverse work experiences to identify innovative solutions in the public and private sectors.

Transcending. North-star professionals exhibited transcending adaptation behavior after they crossed over. These north stars recognized the holistic and synergistic relationship between the sectors. Indeed, the sector boundary seemed to dissolve when they talked about how to engage with the issue – whether job creation or development in Africa – leaving merely a broad-based perspective on all the moving parts of a problem. Transcending behavior appeared across genders, career stage, number of sector crossings, and direction of sector crossing. An example of transcending behavior could be seen when Mary, a former venture capitalist turned economic Cabinet member, approached job creation from a higher vantage point, above the business and government perspectives. Mary saw the need to bring the community together to pass bond legislation and spur innovation. She recounted:

> We proposed a research and development bond [for the university] of $50 million…to do the R&D bond, they said, well, we can't raise a bond and put money out into formative things for research that create more entrepreneurial opportunities. We can't do this because we have too much debt. So I said, well show me the numbers. Now I had been in the leveraged buyout business. So I knew a lot about debt…so I finally [saw the debt number and found in] two or three or four years [the debt ratio] was going to be very, very low…which would mean that we were under-investing in the state. So I made a one-page graph. I learned this, and I carried this, and just showed…you had to have your universities in the forefront [if you wanted innovation]. And I explained how this would create jobs. And people [in the legislature] bought it. [I] brought in the business leaders. And I found that they just had a certain set of things that they repeated…[like] we're never going to win a cost competition…I said, well [what] if we competed on quality and place, and innovation from our university, and

> entrepreneurial environment…why couldn't we win on that? And it was as if nobody had thought that way. So I think that ability to think that way came a lot from my job creation background, and being involved in young and growing companies and looking for markets.

Mary identified the multiple sectors needed to boost job creation, her core issue, and actively worked to bring those pieces of the puzzle together. In this example, she found a creative solution to bring government and business together to pass bond legislation that would lead to entrepreneurship and job creation.

North-star professionals' intense focus on their core issue allowed them to transcend above and "objectively assess" the capabilities of each sector to solve their core issue. For example, north-star professional Erin started in a foreign aid agency focused on Africa and then moved to a management consulting firm and then founded a highly successful international development consulting firm and then served at the U.S. State Department as an advisor on development issues. She was wholly dedicated to the issue of international economic development and was "agnostic" to sector. In her mind, each sector had something to bring to the table, a "lever in the system", but no sector held the answer to the problem of international economic development. She argued:

> There's a certain set of [development] issues that I want to work on. And it remains a question mark for me what actors are best positioned to drive that. I know it's some mix of actors that are public and private…In development, for instance, the U.S. government [thinks] we're the only game in town, [but] there's so much that is happening in social enterprise or foundations and companies that are bigger investors than we'll ever be. So I think all of these [sectors] are levers in the system, right? And the biggest mistake is for any of those [sectors] to see themselves as the [only] lever. But the opportunity is when you can bring the right [sectors] together [to] see that [there's] a problem you're going to solve [and] objectively be able to look at the capabilities that different sectors bring to the table [and] then be able to [get] at the solution…[there is] a bigger group of people [now] who are more agnostic to sector and just believe that [we should] find ways to work across sectors to solve the problem.

In short, I found transcending adaptation behavior only in north-star professionals. This broad, holistic view of an issue potentially spoke to the synthesis of their experiences in multiple sectors and the knowledge gained.

3.6 Networks

Gold-star and north-star professionals seek to make an impact by crossing sector boundaries and enhance their impact through developing portable skills (e.g. handling to press) and serving as an influential node in their multi-sector networks. These efforts to enhance their impact are related to – but distinct from – their actions to gain legitimacy, which focus heavily on claiming authority based on currencies like institutional status and issue-based knowledge. Examining gold-star and north-star networks may be a particularly useful when considering how public-private professionals enhance their impact. My findings suggest that role orientation may predict the character and density of a professional's network. Gold stars and north stars appear to build different types of networks – expansive low-density networks and issue-focused high-density networks respectively – over the course of their careers.

Gold stars have nurtured a substantial and sprawling network including a wide range of people from both sectors. After they cross sectors, gold-star professionals fill the structural hole and oftentimes help others navigate the boundary crossing. While gold-star professionals do not have a cohesive community to which they belong, they are adept at serving as a bridge and building ties between the two distinct sectors. When they cross sectors, however, they leave that sector community behind and cross alone. A senior male executive who has crossed sectors three times (from the White House to a Fortune

500 company to Treasury to Wall Street) mentioned how much time he spent in his informal role as cross-sector job counselor:

> I started a job council for people who want to get into government and politics, and partly, and particularly for people who want to leave government. Because the younger people want to leave government and get into the private sector. And somehow I spend a third of my life, I think, helping people go one way or the other.

For gold-star professionals, these networks served as avenues for potential information about job openings and also sources of powerful recommendations from public-private leaders trusted by private sector executives. These recommenders are critical to validate public sector people whose experience may be unfamiliar to business executives. Another senior gold-star professional who started in a labor agency and moved to Wall Street as an executive described how a former Cabinet member – also a public-private professional – played a key role in bringing former government officials to the private sector:

> And [the former Cabinet member] suggested [the CEO] call me. I was a very unlikely choice for that role [for President/Chief Operating Officer] because I had never worked inside a company. But I think there are certain things I had done that appealed to him, and [the Cabinet member's] recommendation was pretty powerful. And so, after [the Cabinet member's] call to me saying, you're going to get a call from [the CEO] and you ought to accept it, I said, what do you mean accept it? He said, I mean accept the call. He's going to ask you to lunch. Accept the lunch. It came together very quickly after a couple of lunches and one dinner. [The CEO] offered me the job and we actually had worked out a good contract and he was going to announce it the next day. I still hadn't met anyone in the company. He didn't involve anyone else in interviewing me, which was sort of odd. I already knew [the Chairman] and was talking to throughout the process, and with Chuck I had these two lunches and a dinner.

Gold-star professionals span structural holes between sectors and occupy a critical brokerage spot in their wide multi-sector network. The power and information resides with the gold star as the lone value creator and middleman.

By contrast, north-star professionals forge and develop a diverse but cohesive multi-sector network. When they cross sectors, north-star professionals do not cross alone or even really change communities. Their community is external to the organization and remains constant through their career change.

For north-star professionals, networks are primarily issue-based and more closed in comparison to gold-star professionals. For example, north-star professional Christian started at the Treasury Department, then moved to management consulting, and is now a foreign aid policymaker. When considering his next steps after management consulting, Christian remained agnostic to sector but committed to his interest in Africa:

> When I was beginning to look at options, I was as excited to go join, say, Monsanto's new African partnerships office as I was [the U.S. government]. And I still think, had the timing been different and windows of opportunities presented themselves, and I could just as much be in St. Louis right now I could be in DC. It's just that [the U.S. foreign aid agency] came, time-wise, in a much better way

Over the course of his career, Christian developed a strong network of Africa development experts in academia, government and in the private sector. When he looked rejoin the policy world, he reached out to his network and they sent him relevant job postings from their institutions, including his mentors from his time at Treasury a decade earlier.

> My network has always been critical [to gaining jobs], particularly in the DC development world. That's really, really important. So literally mentors that I had when I did that fellowship year way back right after undergrad, those are folks who are now even more senior in the US government and I've just always maintained close contacts with. And so I would routinely come through Washington, even when I was living in South Africa and working [in the private sector], and just meet with them…all of a sudden, friends of mine here in DC who work in this Africa type of business [pinged me with a job opening].

His network sent him the Africa job posting that he eventually accepted in Washington. Since these networks were relatively closed and issue-centric, Christian's main focus was to find a job opening that dealt with African development; unlike the gold-star professionals, Christian did not need to find a strong recommender or job counselor to vouch for him to a skeptical audience. Christian was essentially moving along within the network to a different node as someone with deep knowledge of Africa within the Africa development issue community. In comparison with gold-star professionals, north stars differ in the shapes of their networks as well as how they move within their networks. The gold-star professionals move between communities and act as the lone connection between the two. In contrast, north stars occupy different positions in the same community. When they cross sectors, they rotate positions within this same bounded space. The gold-star ability to translate across sectors and the north-star ability to transcend above sectors reflects their respective positions within their networks.

In short, my findings suggest that gold-star professionals build a lower density network across multiple communities and north-star professionals build a higher density network around a cohesive issue-focused community.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviews my findings on the process of sector boundary crossing and explains the ROAR boundary-crossing model. This boundary-crossing model illustrates how a professional's orientation to a role (gold star general manager or north star substantive expert) will influence how they cross sector boundaries (status or knowledge arbitrage) and how they enact their role (translating or transcending) after crossing boundaries. This chapter also discusses how the networks of gold-star and north-star professionals may differ over the course of a career.

CHAPTER 4

CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This century presents an increasingly complex and global environment for leaders. Societal problems like climate change and cybersecurity are no longer limited to or solvable by a single sector. With complex, cross-sector problems on the rise, it is critically important to develop leaders that understand both the public sector and the private sector. Sector boundary crossing is an increasingly key process to developing leaders for the 21st century.

This dissertation introduces a process model for boundary crossing across sectors. My findings show how cross-sector professionals orient themselves towards either a gold star managerial role or a north star expert role in a bid to increase the scope of their authority and impact. Gold star and north professionals both had to craft persuasive career narratives – rooted in the currencies of status and knowledge respectively – in order to claim legitimacy to cross sectors. To this end, they engaged *status arbitrage* or *knowledge arbitrage*, a narrative-based strategy to claim currency to successfully cross sectors. Finally, after crossing sectors, they enacted these roles by bridging sectors by translating across and transcending above sector boundaries. Implications for their networks are also discussed.

This dissertation seeks to explain how and why people cross sector boundaries over the course of a career. The findings from this study contribute to multiple literatures including boundaryless careers, career theory, and sector-switching. This study serves as a foundation for future research on boundary crossing in a career. Results from this dissertation study also have practical implications for people seeking to construct multi-sector careers and organizations seeking to develop a leadership pipeline for the complex challenges of the 21st century.

4.1 Contributions to Theory

My findings have implications for research on boundaryless careers. Existing research on boundaryless careers has overlooked the importance of boundaries. The process of how people cross boundaries in their careers is often inferred, but has not been examined closely even though boundary crossings form the building blocks of a boundaryless career. My findings suggest there are many boundaries in a career and there is a robust process for crossing boundaries that varies depending on a person's role orientation. This study also introduces arbitrage as a theoretical construct and highlights the importance of status and knowledge as currencies to use in service of crossing sector boundaries. In making these contributions to the field, this study can serve as a starting point to encourage future research in boundary crossing.

Findings from this dissertation also complement and extend the emerging research on career narratives. My study contains interesting parallels with recent research on women leaders (Bowles, 2012) that identified two ways that women claim top leadership positions in business – *navigating* their way to the top within established institutions or *pioneering* a strategic vision through thought leadership and convening a community of followers around this vision. In the navigating accounts, leaders described their goals in terms of particular positions (e.g. CEO) and told what they had done to attain those positions (e.g. top performance as division chief). In the pioneering accounts, leaders focused on telling the story about why their strategic vision was critically important and rallying people to support their idea. Instead of navigating past gatekeepers in a system, the pioneers built social consensus around their ideas and, as their ideas become increasingly recognized, they become elevated as leaders.

While this study focuses on women's leadership in the private sector, the concepts of navigating and pioneering are strikingly similar to the career strategies of gold star and north-star professionals. Drawing from the writings of Weber (1947) and Follet (1949), each group of leaders relies upon distinctly different visions of authority. Both gold star and navigating leaders follow Weber's highly structured and bureaucratic logic to advance their careers to gain authority in established institutions and self-advocate with gatekeepers of those paths. These leaders pay deference to authority based on institutionalized rules and organizational promotion. In contrast, both north star and pioneering leaders depend on Follet's fluid and community-based logic with deference to authority based on skills and knowledge. These leaders develop strategic ideas and build a community of support around that thought leadership.

My dissertation extends this research as it expands beyond institutionalized career paths in corporate settings to cross-sector career paths that are fundamentally not institutionalized. Cross-sector professionals are piecing together careers from well institutionalized corporate and government paths and use these career strategies to cobble together a "boundaryless" career. Gold-star professionals for example have to understand the Weberian logics of each sector, borrow from the institutionalized rules of each system and self-present differently as they move from sector to sector. By contrast, north-star professionals need to understand the Folletian logic of their issue-focused community and focus on gaining issue-specific knowledge as they move sectors. For north-star professionals, the knowledge boundary may be more important than the sector boundary. For example, while north-star professionals can rely upon the currency of knowledge to cross sectors, I speculate north-star professionals may experience greater difficulty crossing beyond their issue community (e.g. a climate change expert becomes interested in women's education) because they lose the power of their context-specific expertise.

Taken together, the two studies shed light on the broader question of how people craft a career that defies convention. While the two studies focused on different groups – women and sector crossers – both groups rely upon carefully edited narratives to claim legitimacy. The women had to explain why as navigators they belonged in a counter-stereotypical male leadership role or why as pioneers they were breaking from an institutional career path to articulate a strategic vision. Likewise, the sector crossers had to explain themselves, their value, and why they hopped between the corporate and government career paths by either claiming credibility through high-status work experiences (gold stars) or persuading people to buy into their story of knowledge gain (north stars). Findings from my dissertation – coupled with this recent research on women leaders – suggest that the gold star and north star orientations might reflect two broader career strategies of pioneering and navigating that can serve as guiding concepts for researchers interested in careers.

Much of the previous research on sector-switching is limited to the European context and conceptualizes sector-switching as uni-directional (public to private sector or private to public sector). Existing literature also lacks an understanding of how a person actually switches sectors i.e. the process of crossing sector boundaries to switch sectors. Yet, the sector boundary crossing process is fundamental to the sector-switching phenomenon. Sector-switching is also prevalent in non-European nations and can occur multiple times over the course of a professional's career. This research widens the scope of research to detail a process for crossing sector boundaries based on careers with bidirectional sector crossings in the United States. Findings from this dissertation shed light on how role orientation – and not direction of the sector crossing – plays the primary role in how people cross sector boundaries.

Findings from my dissertation also add to the long established research on revolving door professionals. While the revolving door phenomenon is well understood, this study expands scholarly understanding of sector-switchers whose career paths differ from revolving door professionals. These sector-switchers, whom I call *public-private professionals*, are different from revolving door professionals in three ways: revolving door professionals are crossing sectors for the instrumental purposes of self-interest and client-interest (to reap economic benefit from government connections personally and for client) instead of service (to the public broadly or to a specific societal problem); revolving door professionals trod a convenient, well institutionalized career path instead of actively piecing together a non-institutionalized career path with agency and self-direction; revolving door professionals also serve as advocates who have already made a decision on how to solve a public policy problem and single-mindedly pursue their argument instead of learning to solve the problem. Their role orientation as a profit-focused client advocate is significantly different from the role orientations of public-private professionals (see Table 4 for comparison).

Table 4: Revolving Door vs. Public-Private Professionals

	Revolving Door	Public-Private Professionals	
Dimension		Gold Star	North Star
Role	Client Advocate	General Manager	Substantive Expert
Target of Impact	To reap benefit from government connections personally and for client	To help society broadly	To solve a complex problem deeply
Career Strategy	Walk well trodden path to gain money or advance an argument	Climb established structures to gain authority	Learn to gain expertise

My findings also have implications for research on crossing cultural boundaries. My data suggest that cross-sector professionals considered the public and private sectors to be two different cultures. In particular, gold-star professionals spoke at great length about the "cultural" differences between the sectors with different languages, social values and norms of behavior. I did not anticipate finding such strong themes of culture and consider this area ripe for additional exploration. As a starting framework, the private sector and public sector could be assessed on the same "tightness" and "looseness" dimensions given to national cultures (Gelfand, 2011) where a "tight" culture has strong norms and a low tolerance for deviant behavior while a "loose" culture has weak norms and a high tolerance for deviant behavior. Given that sectors could be cultures, my findings on sector boundary crossings could help inform the limited scholarship on crossing cultural boundaries. Cross-cultural scholars have called for studies of how people adapt when crossing the boundary from one national culture to another (Molinsky, 2013). My study also suggests scholars take a closer look at how people cross national borders, especially between countries with different status (e.g. developed country vs developing country). For example, a Roman going to North Africa would have a different experience crossing cultural boundaries than a North African going to Rome. While status is rarely discussed in cultural adaptation literature, my study suggests that status could play a central role in crossing cultural boundaries.

Finally, findings from this dissertation may provide important insights into how to develop leaders for the 21st century. With the rise of global, cross-sector problems like climate change, leaders must be capable of and engage in boundary crossing as part of their development as leaders. This dissertation adds to a growing body of literature that draws attention to the benefits of crossing boundaries. People who cross boundaries gain multiple domains of expertise and are more adaptable, creative and flexible (Maddux, Adam and Galinsky, 2010; Dane, 2010). Research suggests that the more people remain in one domain of expertise, the more entrenched and trapped in familiar thinking they become. Narrowly-focused leaders risk developing blind spots (Zaiac and Bazerman, 1991; Bazerman, 2014) and could fail to see "predictable surprises" and major events like the September 11 terrorist attacks (Bazerman and Watkins, 2004) until it is too late. In addition, thinkers who have a wider range of experiences tend to be better forecasters of the future (Tetlock, 2005; Berlin, 2013) since they are not attached to a particular narrative and can adapt their viewpoints to incorporate new information. These leaders may have the power of noticing (Bazerman, 2014) – the ability to see and evaluate information that others overlook. In contrast, thinkers who are narrowly focused have fixed mental frameworks that are highly resistant to new information (Tetlock, 2005; Berlin, 2013). Either new information is forced into the framework or the information is abandoned since it conflicts with their original viewpoint. In an era of extreme volatility and change, it is critical for leaders to have the improved "flexibility with regard to problem solving, adaptation, and creative idea generation" (Dane, 2010) that accompanies working in multiple task environments and gaining multiple domains of expertise. This dissertation contributes to this body of research by identifying two adaptation behaviors that professionals employ to generate innovative solutions to cross-sector problems. It is this ability to adapt that will differentiate leaders of organizations in a relatively stable 20th century from leaders in a more volatile 21st century.

4.2 Practical Implications

This study has practical implications for the organization considering recruiting problem solving public leaders for this global century. This section is written for a practitioner audience in mind.

For the Organization -- Recruiting Talent Into Public Service

Over the past few decades, scholars and mass media alike have decried the decline in our ability to recruit top talent into public service in the United States, particularly at the federal level (Dionne, 2009). My study sheds light on how U.S. government might overcome its struggles to attract high caliber talent into public service. To appeal to the "best and the brightest" talent, the government could construct a short-term program with two types of positions – gold star positions that are tailored for maximum prestige and transferrable skill development and north star positions that are centered around a specific cross-sector problem like climate change that call for multi-faceted problem-solving. Taken together, talented people seeking a “boundaryless” career between business and government could have an opportunity to serve in a manner attractive to them in the short term and beneficial to organization in the long term.

4.3 Limitations and Future Research

Like all efforts to induce theory from a limited sample, the question of generalizability arises. For example, I focused on people who seemingly cross sector boundaries successfully; the process of crossing boundaries unsuccessfully may be qualitatively distinct. The U.S.-centric nature of my sample may also limit generalizability. As mentioned previously, I focused on people who cross the sector boundary between the American public and private sectors. In comparison to some other countries, the United States has a more permeable boundary between the public and private sectors and may exhibit more human capital mobility between the sectors. As such, the process of crossing boundaries in another country with more stringent bureaucratic or legal limits on sector-crossing (e.g. Japan) may be qualitatively different.

Status and legitimacy are important in guiding others’ decision on whether to strike up and build a relationship (Kleinbaum, 2012). The status between firms, sectors, nations and other types of organizational units is dynamic and likely impacts the behavior of boundary crossers. This phenomenon can be seen on the organizational level as low status firms have a difficult time entering high-status markets (Carroll and Swaminathan, 2000) because they are limited by their identities (Phillips, Turco and Zuckerman, 2013). At the individual level, however, there has been scant research on how status impacts people’s transitions across boundaries.

In conclusion, future exploration into different elements of the model, like status arbitrage, is needed to see if the model applies to other settings like crossing national boundaries. Taking a closer look at people's perceptions of sector status using surveys and interviews may also help us understand how much social context of jobs (e.g. low status sector) influences career decision-making.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview protocol
Appendix B: Case Studies

APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

CAREER PATH

1. I'm interested in better understanding how people develop career paths that cross both public and private sectors. Tell me a bit about your career to date. What are the key events of your career path?
2. Tell me about the pivotal moments, if any (e.g. decision points, fork-in-the-road career decisions) in your career as you look back over your career path.
3. Looking towards the future, where do you think your career is going?

TRANSITION

4. How did this sector switch come about?
5. So tell me the story of the switch. How did it unfold?
6. Did you discuss the switch with your family and friends? If so, how?
7. What barriers or obstacles, if any, did you face in switching sectors?
8. Think back to your first month on the job. What surprises did you have (if any) about your new environment?
9. What are the similarities or differences, if any, that you see between the public and private sectors? If so, what are they?
10. So what did you have to do or not do differently? What was same and what was different when you switched? How did you handle the differences?

CAREER SEQUENCING

11. How do you define career success?
12. What allowed you to be successful in the public or private sector and how did sequencing one before the other impact your success?

PEOPLE + IDENTITY

13. Tell me a story about a person who has had a positive influence on your career.
14. Tell me a story about a person who has had a negative influence on your career.
15. We have been talking about the transition between the public and the private sectors. For some people, this switch between the public and private is very difficult. Others find this switch to be not a big deal. Think of examples across the spectrum. What can you tell me about their experiences?
16. Do you identify more with one sector or another?

OTHER

17. What didn't I ask that I should have asked given that I'm interested in cross-sector careers? Am I missing any important issues?

Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX B

Case Studies

I have selected six cases, three from each of the two types of orientations, in hopes of presenting a broader understanding of who these leaders are, why they are motivated to cross sectors, and how they make the leap across sector boundaries. These six cases illustrate the distinct differences between the north-star orientation (Cases #1-3) and the gold-star orientation (Case #4-6) of sector switchers. I also include one additional case (Case #7) of a professional in transition between gold-star and north-star orientations.

Case #1: Christian, North Star – African Development

I developed this case from interviews with Christian, a senior policymaker in a U.S. foreign aid agency and former management consultant in the private sector. He was 35 years old and had crossed sector boundaries three times over the course of his career.

Christian's case stands out for his intense, life-long passion to solve the problem of African economic development. At each turn of his career, he has single-mindedly pursued this puzzle from as many angles as he could. For example, when I asked Christian to describe his career to date, Christian responded:

> Basically I've always had a really, really deep and specific passion on Africa. I can't get more specific than that. I mean literally since I was in high school, I've been just very interested in issues in and topics on or related to Africa. And so when I was an undergrad, that got me exploring different things that I could do over there [in Africa] professionally. And I didn't know what that was, whether it was the nonprofit sector or the business sector or government.

In college, Christian spent his summers in the public sector as a World Bank intern focused on African market access and an intern at a non-profit focused on water pumps in Kenya. Christian wrote his senior thesis on African economic development and after graduation returned to DC on a fellowship to work closely with a senior Treasury Department ("Treasury") official on Africa policy:

> I worked for the senior advisor on Africa at the US Treasury Department. While I was in Treasury, I kept learning more and more that development, particularly in Africa, the only way this was going to be sustainable was if the private sector was the driver. And I didn't really know what that meant. So I figured I really ought to. And so that kind of inspired me to actually put everything on hold and go to grad school and get my joint degree (MBA/MPA). I really got excited by understanding both sides of the story.

For Christian, his desire to understand "both sides of the story" prompted his return to grad school. His comments here suggest that Christian realized he lacked the knowledge he needed to advance African economic development and became motivated to obtain that knowledge. He identified a way to gain this knowledge through his business school studies and, eventually, working in the private sector in Africa. Christian explained:

> At [business school], for the first time, I was really understanding just the world of business and that type of leadership and the world of finance and all that types of thing which I, until then, really hadn't been exposed to. And I realized that I really needed to spend more time in that sphere. And so that was why, when I graduated, I decided to move over to Africa. I moved to Johannesburg to be based in South Africa, but to travel all over the continent, and spent almost seven years as a consultant…working with a whole range of different clients in different sectors and in different functions, just exploring this whole private sector in Africa question. And so I really wanted to get deep into that and I spent a long time getting deep into it.

Christian described wanting to "get deep into" the private sector in Africa to gain the knowledge he lacked. His transition across sectors seemed to be remarkably straightforward and motivated by knowledge gain. When I asked Christian about how he gained access to private sector jobs, Christian briefly discussed recruiting for consulting and appeared unfazed by the process:

> I entered [my consulting firm] like anyone enters [it]. So I wasn't really afraid. It was more sort of like I did this great experience at Treasury, I realized I wanted a private sector experience. I had just graduated from grad school. And so I felt I was going to be as good as anyone else.

Reflecting back on this sector switch from Treasury to the management consulting firm, Christian noted:

> Treasury was a learning experience that sort of left me empty in that, here we were trying to get development to happen by funding all these projects…but it was the private sector that all these things were meant to be spurring, whether it was entrepreneurs in these countries, or getting US businesses to go over there, or whatever it was. And I didn't understand it, at least when I was at the Treasury. And so that's why [business school and public policy school] were so important for me because I got thrown to both of those perspectives and really understanding both sides of that story, which I really hadn't had before. And then actually doing it on the ground in Africa with the private sector for seven years was incredibly instructive because I really got to understand what it meant to do what I thought was so important on the ground.

Christian admitted that his private sector experience had some bumps in the road. Stuck with run-of-the-mill consulting engagements at first, he "struggled" to find senior partners that did the type of "intersection of government and business in Africa" work he yearned to do:

> I did a couple of operations studies in my first few years…and I hated those projects because I'd be out on this mine doing operations and I might as well have been doing an operations study on a mine in Canada, or the US. There's no reason why this was in Africa. So I felt like I was losing a lot of the whole reason for having moved over there because it just wasn't really resonating and I didn't feel like I was having that best developmental impact that I wanted to have. I was just seeing a mine run better, it just happened to be in Africa.

In the interview, Christian described a turning point to me:

> I finally met this director…who was all about working with large multinational agriculture companies like Monsanto and getting them to start thinking very differently about their business models and their operations, particularly in

Africa…we morphed that into work that we started doing at the World Economic Forum and started to work with African governments directly, and a lot of thinking on really out-of-the box public/private partnerships and so on. And so I just really loved it because I was able to really marry these two interests together and do something practical on the ground. That's what changed everything. Because now all of a sudden I was understanding big businesses differently, and getting governments to think differently about big businesses, and all that. And everyone was winning. This was not social CSR type stuff.

After years in Africa, Christian missed home. Christian looked for opportunities that focused on African economic development, but brought him back to the United States.

Later in the interview, when I asked Christian about how he gained access to jobs in public sector, Christian described a tight knit network of mentors and colleagues who also worked on Africa economic development:

> My network has always been critical [to gaining jobs], particularly in the DC development world. That's really, really important. So literally mentors that I had when I did that fellowship year way back right after undergrad, those are folks who are now even more senior in the US government and I've just always maintained close contacts with. And so I would routinely come through Washington, even when I was living in South Africa and working [in the private sector], and just meet with them…all of a sudden, friends of mine here in DC who work in this Africa type of business [pinged me with a job opening].

When considering his next steps, Christian remained agnostic to sector but committed to his interest in Africa:

> When I was beginning to look at options, I was as excited to go join, say, Monsanto's new African partnerships office as I was [the U.S. government]. And I still think, had the timing been different and windows of opportunities presented themselves, and I could just as much be in St. Louis right now I could be in DC. It's just that [the U.S. foreign aid agency] came, time-wise, in a much better way.

Contemplating his next job, Christian realized that, after several years in the private sector, his knowledge had become imbalanced away from the government "side of the story" on African economic development. Christian noted:

I really missed the pure policy development side. It's almost like the pendulum had swung, you know, gone too much in one direction. So that was what made me start looking around to come back into the DC policy realm. So now I'm director here at the [U.S. foreign aid agency] and loving it…but I'm sure just as much as the pendulum had swung all the way to the policy side, I'm sure that I'll want to go back to the private sector side. But I sort of realize that life is going to always be kind of this back and forth between the public and private sector side and figuring how you get the two to work together to ultimately drive what I most care about, which is sustainable development in Africa.

After he returned back to DC, Christian viewed his private sector experience positively and in service of his broader goal of tacking the African economic development problem. He considered himself a "much stronger policy maker" because he had "a richer sense of what types of outcomes we're trying to achieve" when the U.S. government partners with private sector firms in Africa.

Christian has a strong sense of purpose and recognizes his career moving between sectors "focused on a specific thing" like Africa comes with tradeoffs.

I always feel like, for my career, I'm completely comfortable not being in one organization and growing up within it, versus finding the next bigger discrete opportunity to do for a while. And whether it's public or private… you do lose a lot of security out of this whole thing, particularly financially…that type of tradeoff is something I think it is unique to people who have made the choice to sort of bounce back and forth between two the sectors, because they're much more focused on a specific thing, as opposed to the longer-term path of one place.

In summary, Christian has focused on one issue – sustainable development in Africa – for his entire academic and professional life. His motivation for crossing sectors is to make deep impact on this issue. For the past fifteen years, Christian crafted a career that examines this issue from multiple sectors and has filled gaps in his knowledge of various stakeholders in Africa (e.g. private sector) by joining their ranks to "go deep" in understanding their perspective.

Case #2: Mary, North Star – Job Creation

I developed this case from interviews with Mary, a Cabinet-level official and a former investor in the private sector. She was 60 years old and had crossed sector boundaries one time over the course of her career.

Mary's case is instructive for her focus on the issue of job creation. She spent years in the private sector – specifically as a private equity and venture capital investor – before being recruited to the public sector. She describes how a politician invited her husband and her to dinner and surprised her by asking for her help reviving the economy after a military base closure:

> I was in private equity for more than 25 years. And bought lots and lots of companies, turned them around in the recession…the [public official] came to me…and said I need you to create some jobs. You're a venture capitalist. I had no idea what he was talking about, but I went home, and I literally looked out of my house, and 500 yards down the road is the [military base]. And I thought, you know, this is my town, and I need to do something or there won't be jobs here. So I began to work on that.

Mary discovered through a business school classmate that the federal government planned on releasing large grants to states in distressed situations, like military base closings, to help grow their local economies. She quickly pulled together a team to write a proposal to compete for the grant. Mary recounted:

> It turned out to be a great project, well written, and the boat builders [whose industry could be rejuvenated with new technology through the grant] were pretty great, exciting folks. So we won. And it was $20 million. Well, if you bring $20 million to the [state], you know, boom. Somehow things get noticed. And so people began to ask me, could I be involved in figuring out how to create a cluster strategy or an economic development strategy for other parts of [the state]? So I developed an idea that, if clusters were going to work in [the state] for boats, what else did we have? So the public official put [cluster grants] into the budget. And people said, what is this? We don't understand it. And they said, "You have to bring somebody up here who can explain what clusters are to the caucus." And I said, what's a caucus? No idea. So I am now learning about government. And this

> was my initiation…this experience [allowed me to] follow an interest that I had about creating jobs [and] understand the intricacies of the legislative process.

Mary pursued her interest in creating jobs and took it a step further by co-chairing a multi-million dollar economic development bond for the state.

> The bond passed the legislature, and then it had to go to a public referendum. And so that was my first election experience [and] I was able to get the community college and the university and all the economic development people to join together.

Mary pursued her interest in economic growth and job creation and found herself uniquely able to draw from her private sector experience:

> I just got very, very engaged in the idea of being able to drive economic growth. Nobody else from the business community had these experiences and these ideas and understood the power of clustering small businesses...I had a thought about what to do [to create jobs] that seemed to be new and different.

Later in the interview, Mary related another example of how she continued to push for job creation and became a thought leader on the topic:

> The way I got to Washington was [a think tank] came and did a study [on the cluster project] and then they asked if I would write a paper on clusters. And the issue was, what is the federal role in regional economic clusters? What should the federal government be doing? So I found this very interesting…that paper came out. And because of that, in a variety of ways, someone noticed and asked me to come on the transition team after the President won.

In our interview, I asked Mary how she was recruited to the Cabinet:

> It was because of that paper…[I did] no fundraising. No nothing. It was expertise. I had not met the President except for once, like for a 30 second handshake, you know.

I asked Mary to look ahead to the future and what she hopes to do next. She expressed an interest in continuing to push on creating jobs and serving as a thought leader on the issue:

> I think the theme that I'm doing here is job creation. I'm going to the UK because they want to create a [job creation agency] at the cabinet level…I would like to continue to be a public voice on the economy, growth, and job creation.

I asked Mary about her transition into the public sector and she detailed three management strategies she used regardless of sector:

> One is real fact-based analysis, so you know more about what the numbers are, what's in the bill, why did that happen, than anybody else…second is making personnel at the highest level. So you look at everybody, not just [politicals]…and the third one is are we able to define outcomes and then measuring the outcome pattern, having a strategic vision about what success looks like. Not a process.

On this last point, Mary repeatedly stressed the importance of outcomes and derided "process as the solution." For example, she would gently chastise staff who walked into her office with a process-oriented solution like holding a meeting. She recalled:

> People knew very clearly not to come into my office unless they had the answer the question "what is the outcome you are trying to achieve?" What they would say, well, we'll have a meeting…and I say I'm going here [to this outcome]…you tell me how your success adds to going here, and I will help you get there. Make sure you have the money. Make sure you have the people. Make sure you have the outcomes.

In summary, Mary's case stands out for her commitment to convening a multi-sector community and writing thought pieces to push for the issue of job creation. Mary brought evergreen managerial strategies to both sectors and focused heavily on outcomes instead of process to push for change.

Case #3: Andrew, North Star – Entrepreneurship

I developed this case from interviews with Andrew, a mid-career entrepreneur who had previously worked on policy for a law enforcement agency. He was 28 years old and had crossed sectors once over the course of his career.

Andrew's case stood out for his passion for entrepreneurship and his desire to bring government and business together to foster innovation across sectors. Andrew first started in the public sector before becoming an entrepreneur and he anticipates returning to the public sector shortly. Andrew realized early on in his career that he cared about promoting entrepreneurship:

> I had my first company for about five years before I sold it to my largest competitor…it gave me the experience to realize what I was truly passionate about. It was after I sold my company, I realized that's what I always wanted to do is to explain and to help others about entrepreneurship.

Andrew describes a moment that galvanized him to seek more knowledge:

> I was in Rwanda to teach entrepreneurship and the experience really changed my life. It actually changed the trajectory of my career because that was the first time that I clearly saw the clear connection between my passion in the entrepreneurship and the social impact of it…so when I came back to the States I applied to both [business school] and [public policy school]. I realize that, to create a sustainable change, I have to understand the business world and the public sector really, really well. Although my background is in entrepreneurship, I feel that I was limited to what I knew…and I thought that, by going to business and policy school, I would get exposed to different experiences from different people. So in a sense going through the curriculum, I would enrich myself by learning from others.

Andrew's search for knowledge is in pursuit of a larger vision to help promote entrepreneurship through public policy.

> Basically my vision [for] what I'm going to do in the future is to help aid government agencies for growth and development in the private sector through policies**.** Because I've been in the private sector. I'm an entrepreneur. So I know what entrepreneurs have gone through or are going through. So then I felt that I will have a lot of credibility when I work for government because now I know what is needed to be done. And really trying to use the resources that government has to support entrepreneurs or innovation in the private sector. Or in the public sector as well.

Andrew went on to describe his passion for entrepreneurship and how entrepreneurship gave him freedom:

> The thing with entrepreneurship is, for me, it's not a career. It's not a position. It's not a job. It's my destiny. It's something that sets me free. It gave me freedom. And it's something that lifted our family from poverty as well. So it will always be part of me. I will never forget where I came from. So I will always get involved. Like either advising entrepreneurs, or still maintaining some kind of involvement with my company.

In our interview, Andrew continually came back to the difference between internal validation and external validation. He had a strong sense of self and rarely looked to others as role models:

> I never look a somebody and then say, you know what? I'm going to model my career after that person. Because I believe every path is very unique and it's highly subjective…I think a lot of people make mistakes looking at somebody's path and saying you know what? I'm going to do what that person does…I'm very conscious of not doing that because then I will lose my sense of self.

I asked Andrew about entrepreneurs' motivations to better understand his motivations since he clearly identified as an entrepreneur. He stressed that outside validation is something that entrepreneurs do not depend upon:

> If you work for McKinsey, you know every couple of weeks you will get a check. You know that people will validate you. When you're here you say you work for McKinsey, they'll say, oh yeah, you must be smart. I think when you need an outside validation, it's hard to be an entrepreneur. Because it can be a very lonely road or path that you take. There are a lot of people that won't believe in you…and you have to rise above that. And it takes a different kind of person.

Andrew stressed the idea of authenticity and crafting a career based on being true to yourself:

> If you're being authentic, you will always end up on the path that you're supposed to end up and that will be, I feel like you are a lot more content when you know you are being authentic…I don't believe that anybody or anything in this world holds the key to my success. I know. Because I believe that the person or that thing that holds the key to my success is myself. Nobody does.

When asked what he would bring to government when he crossed, he focused on being able to understand what makes people tick:

> My ability to understand what people's motivations, where they're coming from, what they want, what they need, and all of that.

In summary, Andrew clearly is inspired by his "passion" to spread entrepreneurship through public policy programs. His case also stands out for its differentiation of internal and external validation.

Case #4: Bonnie, Gold Star

I developed this case from interviews with Bonnie, a mid-career public sector official at the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and a former economic consultant in the private sector. She was 37 years old and had crossed sector boundaries once over the course of her career. Bonnie plans to cross sectors a second time and is currently searching and interviewing for jobs in the private sector.

Bonnie's case stands out for the tension between her desire for meaningful work in the public sector and her desire to gain private sector skills and status to improve her career. Out of college, she worked at a private consulting firm and then went to business school where she aimed to go into finance. However, she "had a hard time figuring out how to get behind their business models" or "how to find meaning in the work those companies were doing." Bonnie describes how she got recruited to the FBI:

> It just so happened that the FBI was recruiting for MBAs. And so I didn't seek out the FBI opportunity. They reached out to me and asked me if I'd be interested to interview with them. So that's how I ended up in federal government service.

Bonnie described her decision to go into the public sector and focused on what her peers thought of her sector switch.

> This deciding actually to come to the Bureau instead of go back to the private sector, that was kind of a big deal for me, I mean because I went to business school to go do something different…a lot of my classmates said, you know, you

can't go do that job because the pay is too little. The starting salary when you add the bonus in was about in line with what other people were making, but the actual salary was not great. And then of course the salary potential as it increases is not as great in the government.

Bonnie's characterization of her work emphasized her business skills. Bonnie believed she was "still doing government work, but basically trying to bring a business perspective to ideas." Bonnie aimed to help the FBI develop a business framework and deploy private sector tools to improve their operations:

> I'm trying to help [the FBI] actually just create a structure. They've never had anybody create a strategic plan for them or come up with a climate survey or doing anything related to making their processes more efficient. So mapping processes and figuring out where they're not being efficient, what they could do better. I do a lot of executive coaching now as well because I work with all attorneys who don't have a lot of management experience.

Later in the interview, Bonnie told me she hoped to cross back into the private sector within the next few months. Bonnie envisioned a cross-sector career, but struggled with the lack of mission in the private sector, an ongoing concern of hers since business school.

> I'm starting that active job search. The decision to go back to the private sector, I really kind of envision my career as one going back and forth between the private and public sectors…it's hard for me now to think about doing something outside of national security because I'm so used to working for an organization whose mission I believe in. That's really been an important thing to me. So to try and go back to do something like to work for a bank or something, it's hard to kind of, like what would I be doing every day?

Despite the draw to the public service mission, Bonnie didn't want to be "stuck" in the public sector and sought more authority and operational skills in the private sector. In her view, returning to the business world would be valuable experience and could help her advance to the upper echelons of government in the future.

> I do feel like I don't want to be stuck in government in the sense that I have business skills that I would like to use again. So I would like to go back and do

> something where I have more authority over my budget which I don't have in the government…I also am interested in moving into more operational role where I get broad-based experience…I feel like I need to jump out of government in order to move up in government in the future.

Here, Bonnie indicates her concern with advancement in her career and also finding meaning in her private sector work. She is considering a wide range of topics areas and industries and does not identify a particular cross-sector issue or problem she hopes to solve. She is, however, very focused on gaining a high status title (Chief Operating Officer or COO) with "more authority" and developing "broad-based" experience that would be applicable in multiple sectors:

> My goal is to be a COO. That's really what I would like to do. So I feel like I need to go out and experience that in the private sector so I can bring those lessons back to government. So I've tried to figure out what industry or sector to be in. I've been looking sort of at healthcare because that's another area where I feel like the mission of the organization is probably something I can get behind. However, I'm pretty open right now. I've been looking just for operations roles, like as a VP of operations, or a COO of operations across sectors. So I've been looking in finance and looking in general manufacturing. I don't really feel very passionately about those industries, but if I could get the experience, I would do that.

Bonnie discussed her communication strategy when crossing sectors. She explains her government experience to prospective private sector employers using business-oriented language:

> I really try to keep the government out of it and try to talk about it in terms of operations and the type of business success that I've had, efficiencies that I've been able to push through, even with the bureaucracy that you have in government. So I try to frame my experience as being about like high-level strategic advisory services and operations to try and get it to be something they understand.

Networks are important to Bonnie. Throughout the interview, Bonnie referenced other colleagues at the FBI who had come in from the private sector. Bonnie spoke critically of one colleague's transition into the public sector:

> [My colleague] started at Lehman Brothers, and he came in as a very hard charger, but everyone was very skeptical of him because he was young. He was in his early thirties. He came in as the CIO and he had all these big projects that needed to happen. You know, we have very large kind of failed IT projects in government, and he was supposed to change all those…He came in and tried to kind of make a whole bunch of changes to the organization without truly understanding it, without having time to actually understand how the politics of the organization worked. And tried to push a whole bunch of things forward. And people hated him and he came and tried to restructure everything right away…he lost a lot of really good people.

At the end of the interview, Bonnie reflected on her professional identity and how she felt as a government employee:

> I really still truly feel like an outsider, even though I've been in the government now seven plus years. Because I think I still bring the business perspective, and I think that so many things that we do here are ridiculous [like] the way that the funding process works with Congress…from that perspective, I haven't bought into the idea that this is just the way things work. It doesn't need to work this way. But there are so many things that I can't change at my level. I would need to go out of government and come back in at a higher level, much higher level, to be able to make any kind of positive change. So in that sense, I probably want to defend parts of the government and also want to get rid of parts of it. When people are out attacking the government from the outside, I feel very defensive because I know that so many of my colleagues do amazing work. And they're able to do things and protect the country in spite of all the stupid things that Congress puts in place that restrict us, that prevent us from doing what we need to do. They do it in spite of that because they're just passionate and they want to get the job done and they find a way to do it. So in that way, I identify with them, and then, like I said, in other ways I still have the mindset of a private sector business person.

In summary, Bonnie has focused on advancement of her career by moving from one sector to another with the goal of attaining a high level position so she can make unspecified "positive change" back in government. She is motivated to cross to the private sector to gain "broad-based" experience and a high-status title (e.g. COO) and is agnostic to which industry to join or which societal problem to tackle. Bonnie is primarily concerned about having meaning and mission in her work along with employing her business skills to make a differences.

Case #5: Kathy, Gold Star

I developed this case from interviews with Kathy, a mid-career private sector investor and former U.S. Treasury official in the public sector. She was 33 years old and had crossed sector boundaries twice over the course of her career.

Kathy wants to give back to society and to be at the center of the action. With each part of her career, she has selected jobs that develop valuable, portable skills and navigated the transitions between sectors with her "storytelling" skill. After she graduated college, Kathy took a job as an investment banker on Wall Street, successfully climbing the ranks and entering the more exclusive private equity industry. She returned to business school in the middle of the financial crisis in 2009. Kathy described her role in the financial crisis and what drew her to Washington:

> I was part of a small team of folks who, as the financial crisis was unfolding, moved down to DC and tried to figure out was there a way that we could use our skills that we'd developed in the private sector to help a lot of the bigger issues that were happening in the public sector…I was so interested by everything that you saw on the news that I was willing to move to DC and work for free if I could just sort of be a fly on the wall, understanding what Hank Paulson was thinking when he decided to bail out AIG, for example.

Being in the thick of the action, even if just to view the drama on center stage as an unpaid "fly on the wall," drew Kathy to Washington during the crisis. Kathy also had a pre-existing interest in the public sector, rooted in her family's values of service to society.

> I also always had an interest in public sector. My mom is a public high school teacher, and my dad's a professor, and I think there's always been a very strong sense of giving back that has been instilled in me.

Kathy set her sights on Washington DC while in business school and "started networking with every person that [she] knew had any connection to what was happening in DC." When asked to describe how she crossed into the public sector, Kathy said:

> Basically through all of these various touch points my resume ended up landing on the desk of a guy that was in charge of hiring people to staff up TARP [Troubled Asset Relief Program], and you know, I found out that he was someone that another friend of mine knew, and I called him and made sure that he saw my resume, and told him I was going to be in DC and would love to meet with him. And I basically went down there, and I ended up having a meeting with him, and then a meeting with fifteen other people, and they gave me a job offer at the end of the day.

At first, Kathy reports, her peers scratched their heads at Kathy's desire to move to DC, but then became enthusiastic about her public sector work due to its high profile in the press and high status perks like flying with the President:

> I think a lot of people didn't really understand why I was even interested in going to work in the public sector, what the attraction was. And I think that there was a little bit of not really understanding why I was interested in it, what I was doing, why I would accept low or no pay. And then what's fascinating is, as things started to unfold…it turned into a – people didn't really understand what I was doing, into people being enthusiasts. But I think part of it was just the nature of the work was very high profile, it was always in the press. Like I got to fly on Air Force One with the President.

In the interview, Kathy repeatedly remarked on the differences she noticed between the public and private sector and focused in on the process of how decisions are made. In government, Kathy said:

> The biggest revelation for me was really like the different currency between the public and private sector and how decisions are made. I feel like starting in any job, whether it's in the private sector or the public sector, you have to get up to speed on how decisions are made. But it was just very stark, the fact that the currency was so different.

She specifically highlighted the distance to power and decision-makers as a critical currency in Washington:

> Unlike in the private sector where people demonstrate their power by how much money they make, in the public sector it was what information you had, how close you were to the decision makers, and where your office was located – [those] were the currencies of power, rather than money. So figuring out, well, if you are in the inner circle, which in DC it meant how close were you to the President, how many rooms away from the President were you? Or if not the President, how far away from Tim Geithner were you? Both physically and on an information basis. So figuring out that the currency was different in the public sector, I think, was probably the biggest thing.

In the interview, Kathy gave an example of proximity as a currency of power in her own career:

> When I first started, a lot of the central decision makers were physically located in the Treasury building, which was next to the White House. And all of the overflow people were located in this other building, which was like five blocks away and it was sort of a nondescript ugly government building. It was very, very apparent that the decisions that got made that were important and where all of the action was happening was in the Treasury building, because both you're physically closer to the White House, and that's where Tim Geithner sits, and that's where all of the money was. That's where like real decisions actually happen…there was a movement to move people into this other building, and I very strongly resisted it, and I basically just like squatted in someone's office in the Treasury building, refusing to move. Because I was worried the further away I was, the less rich my experience would be and the less in the flow I would be in terms of decisions they were making. But that was something that was very, very obvious and very tangible like pretty early on.

Later in the interview, Kathy also pointed out the importance of title in the public sector compared to the private sector:

> I think currency in the public sector, was of a title. Because you weren't getting paid, your title was inflated. You had a lot of like Deputy Assistant Secretary of the XYZ thing. I never heard of someone that had so many different superlatives in their title. And if you read the press, what you'll start noticing, like, oh, someone who is like a deputy assistant secretary is actually just like a low-level person, but they have a very fancy title, which makes them seem very important.

In contrast, Kathy detailed how the private sector's currency was not closeness to power, but money:

> So when I was at [the investment bank], it was very clear cut. Like if you made a lot of money, you had a lot of influence. And if you made a lot of money by bringing in a lot of business for the firm. It was very, very clear cut. And everyone was judged solely by economics, and no one really cared which building you were in, which office you were in, people didn't care about being seen with the CEO. In fact, being with the CEO was kind of annoying, it's like it would mean you were in trouble or something bad was happening. So it's very different.

Kathy decided to move back to the private sector for professional and family reasons:

> I had always thought that I'd return to the private sector at some point because I'm still relatively young in my career, and I ultimately want to be building skills that I could use to help the country…I got married, and my husband had always been based in New York, even when I was living in DC. So, you know, if I really wanted to move to DC, we could have done that, but I knew I was going to return to the private sector at some point, [so] it was a natural transition point.

Kathy commented about others in the community that she had seen make a bumpy transition between the sectors.

> I think if you know that you are going to transition between the public and private sector, you need to be thoughtful and almost careful about the things that you work on in the public sector, so you don't either (a) get branded as a government bureaucrat; and (b) so you can demonstrate that your skills are transferrable across industries, so you have functional, or industry, or domain expertise that's directly translatable into the private sector. I think people that I've worked with that made transitioned less successfully either were too broad or were working on things that the private sector doesn't really value or care about. And I think that the converse is true. People that have made the transition incredibly successfully and have done super innovative, entrepreneurial, really interesting things were able to show that they developed functional expertise, or like I said, they were working a project that was very complicated and they had to navigate amongst all these very political people, and their current job needs them to be adept in managing complex interpersonal situations, or because they were working on something that is an area of particular industry experience. They were working in the auto industry and they've gone back to advising in the auto industry. But those that have been most successful have had some sort of direct translatable skill and they've been able to tell their story well.

I asked Kathy what she meant by “tell their story well” and she explained using her own job transition as an example:

> For example, when I was interviewing to come back into the private sector, I had to be able to explain like why did I go to the public sector, and what did I work on, what did I learn, why is that a great, unique, differentiated skill that I now have that makes me even more attractive a hire back into the private sector? And I don't think that everyone has the building blocks to be able to tell that story, or is able to pull it all together to make it sound reasonable.

In our interview, Kathy looked ahead to the future and saw the potential for another sector switch:

> The experience in DC definitely whetted my appetite to go back into public service at some point. And I think the next time that I will go back will probably be an elected office, rather than working as an appointed official…I want to be the decision maker, not just be close to the decision maker. So that will probably be my next move…I grew up in Florida, so I'd love to be the governor of Florida, which, when I think about my current job and my past jobs, a lot of my experience in positions that I've been fixing broken companies. Being the governor of Florida, it's a state with a lot of problems, and they have a lot of broken issues. And if I am able to successfully demonstrate that I can fix broken companies on a large global scale, I think they're skills that are sort of directly translatable. I don't think I'm going to be able to run for governor in like three years from now. So you have to sort of think about what the building blocks are to get there. But ultimately that's sort of the path that I want to be headed down.

In her comments above, Kathy is focused on attaining a high status position, governor of Florida, and to be in a position of power and decision-making authority. Kathy views herself as a businesswoman who spent time in the public sector.

> Because I've worked in the private sector, I definitely identify as someone that has got private sector expertise. But that I always think about who my constituents are…I think it's very similar when you're an elected official. You can think about who are your constituents? Who's paying your bills? Whose money actually are you sort of overseeing? And it's the taxpayers.

In summary, Kathy moved to the public sector during a time of crisis where her skills in the private sector allowed her to help people while also continuing a tightly crafted career story of fixing broken companies across sectors. She is focused on attaining a high status position (e.g. governor of Florida) in the future and is setting up the "building blocks" experiences to achieve her goal.

Case #6: Annie, Gold Star

I developed this case from interviews with Annie, an early-career private sector banker and former White House official in the public sector. She was 23 years old and had crossed sector boundaries twice over the course of her career.

Annie's case stands out for her desire to emulate the career paths of other public-private leaders and employ targeted storytelling to gain entry to the private sector. She identifies people she wants to be and charts her career based on their example. In the White House, Annie saw multiple examples of high level principals who had come from investment banks like JP Morgan, Citi, and Goldman Sachs as well as private equity firms.

> I had always been set on public service and when I was working in the chief of staff's office, what I do often is I look to leaders and role models to see how they got to where they are…to see how they got to where they are. And I looked around, and I saw that the majority of people who I would want to see myself in the position had gone through finance.

She acknowledged that many others came from law firms, but said she chose to do finance for two reasons:

> One, because that's what I saw a lot of leaders in public service doing to get to where they were; and, two, that's what the environment of my peers were doing a lot. And so I decided that I should try it out if so many other people were trying it out…There was this prestige that was attached to becoming a banker.

I asked Annie to walk me through the process of how she moved into the banking position from her role at the White House. She explained:

> I looked at what I could leverage from my experience, and I drew a venn diagram basically. It was like, this is my experience and this is what the private sector includes. This is where I can overlap. And where that overlap happened was in public finance investment banking…I specifically looked at what I could say that no one else could say. And what that was, was that, at the White House, I worked on Build America Bonds. And I looked at the ARRA, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, and I looked at their infrastructure and how basically BABs helped track and analyze like how we were doing. And that's exactly what public finance is.

I prodded Annie to see how much of this strategy had been planned in advance. I asked Annie whether she had been given that project or if it was something she had sought:

> I did request that project. (Why?) Because I knew, when I looked at these principals, I was like, wow, look, all of them did some sort of finance. A lot of them did investment banking. How would it be possible for me to crack into this field when I haven't done anything like that? This is how. So my observation was early on. And then it literally wasn't in my office. So ARRA was run out of the vice president's office, and when I was there, there was actually one guy left who was tracking everything…and they gave him this desk that was in a random corner. And that random corner happened to be across from my office. And so every day, I would walk in and be like, hey, [Joe]…and then I straight out asked. It was like hey, I have some extra time. Of course I didn't. But, I have some extra time. Could I help you with anything? And he said, oh, yeah. Here's some ARRA stuff. Can you look at how Build America Bonds impacts this, this, and this? I knew nothing about this, but this was my in. So I sat there and researched it so that I could talk about it intelligently at the [investment banking] interview.

Annie also discussed how she wanted to see the broader picture of how government worked.

> The reason that I wanted to get into [finance] was because of this broader picture. I see how important it was for cities and states and municipalities to be funded, and that that's how real work got done. Like if they didn't have the funding, then they wouldn't be able to exist.

Annie proactively raised a point about a cultural gap between her own background as a first generation immigrant and those of her colleagues.

> I felt like there was this cultural gap that happened between what I was processing things and how everybody else functioned. So by that I mean I would make these faux pas that, had I been born into a blue blood, would not have, and learn very quickly what they were. I remember talking to my boss [in banking] and he had told me that he was in Boston, and I accidentally asked, "Oh, how was your bus ride?" And he was like, I don't take buses…[At the White House], some of them clearly came from donors' families but understood that this culture didn't really award that kind of behavior.

Just before I concluded the interview, I asked if there were any issues I had missed in our discussion. Annie pressed me to ask her about "the culture issue" that she brought up unprompted earlier in the interview. She said:

> I don't exactly know how to frame the question, but it would be about the different cultures and the people that I work with…at the White House, it was how I saw people advance up the ladder…It seemed like a lot of these people who were senior staffers were chosen from outside in. And that these people going outside in, their outside included finance. That's how they advance up the ladder. And then on the private sector investment banking side, I saw that it was pretty structured. But to advance up the ladder, there were very huge indicative social norms that were really, really important. And schmoozing your MD, that's a polite way of saying it. Yeah. So I guess the question is about culture and advancement.

In summary, Annie's case stands out for the inspirational role her older colleagues play on her career; Annie also has a good grasp of the story telling needed to craft a narrative to move from the public sector to the private sector.

Case #7: Yael, Gold Star to North Star Transition

I developed this case from interviews with Yael, a mid-career private sector professional and former White House economic adviser. She was 28 years old and had crossed sector boundaries three times over the course of her career.

Yael's case stands out for her personal transition between branded "gold star" jobs to a more obscure career in a newly discovered passion, social enterprise. Throughout the interview, Yael swings back and forth between two very different motivations – one driven by status and prestige and one motivated by knowledge and excitement for social enterprise.

Yael grew up very interested in politics. Around her dinner table, she and her finance professional parents always talked about current events. She worked early on in her career at a U.S. senator's office and then at an office in another nation's Ministry of Finance which was "interesting because it had more of a financial bent." This finance ministry job led her to her first sector switch into an investment banking job at a global financial services firm. She quickly saw downsides to her banking career:

> I look up the ladder [and found] that I don't want to be those people in ten or fifteen years…[banking] work was intellectually interesting, but it wasn't producing tangible results necessarily…we raised money for a mismanaged aircraft leasing company that's part of a larger corporation that was poorly managed for decades and received government bailout money. We're not sure what they're going to do with the money, but we got paid a fee. And it's sort of like, well, why did I spend years of my life missing my mother's birthdays and not seeing my friends, to do something like that?

A major career turning point for Yael came when she attended a talk at her company hosted by a well-known social entrepreneur:

> I had never heard the term social enterprise before...which is kind of crazy to think about now, but I'd just never did. And so [this speaker] starts talking about how you can take these fabulous market-based skills that you've gained in your day jobs and apply them to causes that you care about, I was like, that's what I've wanted to do like my whole life. And when people have been asking me what I wanted to do, I couldn't explain it because I didn't know there was a word for it. But now there is…that for me was like a real turning point in terms of realizing this is out there and that people had jobs doing this and there was a whole kind of industry building up around it.

Yael started volunteering with the social entrepreneur's organization and started dedicating increasing amounts of time to it:

> I was working these crazy hours till 4:00 or 5:00 AM. But I realized I wasn't working till 4:00 or 5:00 AM. I was working till like 2:00 or 3:00 AM, and then I was working on a consulting project for [the social enterprise] and I would find myself working until 4:00 or 5:00 AM, so like two or three extra hours. And then I'd be so in the flow of it and so just locked in and enjoying it, and then I'd realize I hadn't even called my car [to take me home]…so, it was tapping into more of my energies and more of my passions in a way that my day job wasn't.

Throughout the interview, Yael struggled to reconcile her "attachment to a brand name" with her newfound passion in social enterprise, swinging back and forth from moment to moment:

> It's really nice to be able to tell people where you work and not have to explain what it is and, you know, at a certain age and in a certain phase of life when that means something to you…I think more recently my career choices have been less driven by brand. Like I don't care if I work for a small no-name firm that does something people haven't heard of, as long as it's exciting to me and I have a meaningful role and I like leave and go home every day, thinking like I pushed this forward, I made this happen, I'm really excited about what we're doing.

Yael exhibits a reluctance to let go of prestigious brand names that open doors and preserve her "optionality" or number of options available to her. She commented that optionality is important as a signal of your quality as a job candidate as "you're evaluated based on how many options you have at your disposal." When asked about the next steps in her career, Yael says:

> I have thought about what would it mean to do private equity now, have a good name on my resume, [so if working in the public sector] didn't work out, I [at least] worked for KKR …so I'm legit. That's coming back to the brand names…having the brand from [KKR] and [elite undergraduate and graduate schools] and all of that helps me feel a little bit more secure.

While at school doing a dual degree masters in business and in public policy, Yael showed remarkable restraint in focusing her attention on her primary passion, social enterprise:

> People always talk about coming into the joint degree program as multiplying your options and…I think you can sort of drown in that. I drew the line [and]

> most of the time I spend doing stuff that's business focused, impact investing, social enterprise…I've had to be a lot more disciplined. I think you go crazy otherwise.

Yet in her current job search, she juggled a number of options that strayed away from her newfound cause of social enterprise.

> I could do something like a tech start-up and that's still in the back of my mind. But I'm trying to still be true, at least philosophically, to what brought me here. And unless there's some epiphany that says, no, I need to be working on the West Coast at a startup, or I really need to go into consumer packaged goods management or marketing. I just don't see those epiphanies happening. I've heard of them. I feel a fairly strong pull towards it. I still feel a fairly strong pull towards either the electoral politics side of things or the business/government sort of social investment side of things.

In the interview, Yael swung repeatedly from wanting to make general broad impact to talking about how she could specifically create impact in the social enterprise space by bringing together the private sector, social sector and public sector.

> I think you sort of have to invest in good government and that means different things to different people, like donating time, donating money, like donating your career. So if I can do something that will be for the benefit of society by contributing in that way, like basically donating part of my career to public service, that's something that I would like to do…I did a lot in terms of bridging [the social enterprise] and [her investment bank] with my public sector roots so now they actually have a pretty good partnership. What I like about this [social enterprise] career path that I'm trying to carve is that I'm trying to do something that I think other people might see the same things and not necessarily bridge them.

Throughout the interview, Yael takes comfort in the brand names on her resume but recognizes that she may need to depart from prestigious, recognizable names to pursue her interest in social enterprise. For example, she says "there's a little bit of pressure to demonstrate what you're passionate about through your career, but there's also some comfort that I find in knowing that I have the brands." Yet, she acknowledges that brands and "chasing the gold star" have their shortcomings:

> Having the brand from [my investment bank] and [elite undergraduate and graduate schools] and all of that helps me feel a little bit more secure. As I look at my peers who are trying to [cross sectors], I think the question is when do you stop going for the brand name and chasing the gold star, and doing what you actually want to do? I have a friend who says she wants to cure urban poverty in America. And her career to date has been Yale, Goldman, Bain, KKR, Stanford JD/MBA. And I'm like where does curing poverty happen?

Yael aims to be a thought leader in social enterprise and seeks to build community around shared stories and to highlight the talent needs for the field in publications.

> I've decided that I want a big part of my career to be playing thought leader in this social enterprise field because I feel like a lot of people are doing interesting things, but no one's telling the stories in the right way and nobody's identifying and calling out in public what we need in terms of people…who's bridging the skills and talent gap in social enterprise? The fact that nobody's writing about it is an indication that it's so far ahead of where we are, that we need to be talking about it…I've observed it so I want to get an op-ed out.

Yet, then Yael also raised the possibility she might run for office based on her private sector success:

> I think I'll sort of dance back and forth between the two [sectors]. And I also am a believer that, before you run for office or do something like that, you have to have a real solid career and be able to very clearly articulate this is what I did. I worked with this group. I brought this to the table and we achieved these results. [Results] are really emphasized in the private sector. Not so much in the public sector. But when you look at what successful candidates do when they tell their story, that's what they do.

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