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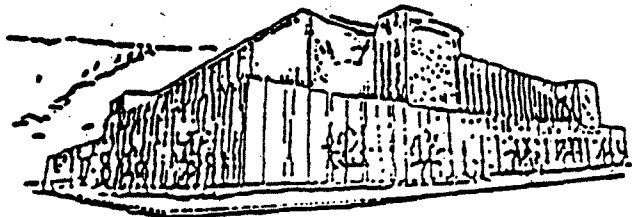
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"WHERE ARE ALL THE FORESTERS?":  
WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

By

Susan A. Czajkowski

B.A. University of Delaware, 1997

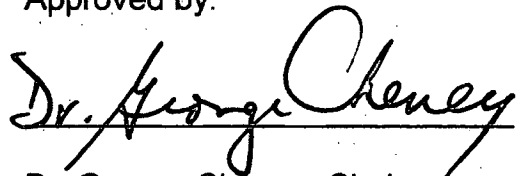
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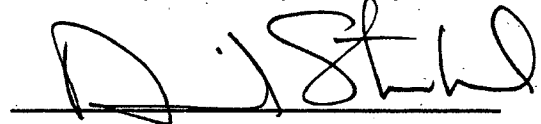
Master of Arts

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Approved by:



Dr. George Cheney, Chairperson



Dean, Graduate School

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"Where are all the Foresters?": Women and Leadership in the United States Forest Service

Director: Dr. George Cheney



This study of women and leadership in the U.S. Forest Service is a critical-interpretive analysis of narratives provided by male and female organizational members. The research question asks, "What do the organizational stories reflect about the dominant and alternative or opposing perspectives toward female leadership within the U.S. Forest Service?" To answer this, narratives were analyzed for their reflection of the organization's ideology of power, attitudes concerning leadership styles, roles, the gendered nature of those roles, control, hierarchy, and communicative strategies. The narratives were collected through interviews with both male and female participants in similar management positions across Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service.

The narrative analysis progresses through three distinct levels, beginning with a descriptive analysis, and moving ultimately to a critical-interpretive approach that draws on a more pragmatic point of view. The resulting themes that emerge in the third level of analysis are as follows:

- The U.S. Forest Service is changing, and employees must adapt
- Employees feel a tension between their home and work lives
- Authority is sometimes retractable, locally and centrally within the organization
- Leadership styles are often learned through observation and experience
- Tokenism can be managed through many tactics, only one of which is to increase the number of women
- As decentralized as the organization is, the power remains in the central offices
- Diversity in terms of occupational specialization has added to organizational complexity.

For the U.S. Forest Service, results indicate that members view the organizational changes that have paralleled the influx of women as positive and constructive for the agency. Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service stands, in this, as a representative of how the integration of women into an organization can be handled, for the most part, successfully. A large organization striving for gender-integration may thus derive strategies for success from this study. Also, it may provide a better understanding of communicative strategies of female leaders in organizations that are already gender-integrated.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Large projects are rarely completed alone, and this one is no exception. With heartfelt thanks, I would like to acknowledge the following people for their help in this endeavor...

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## CHAPTER 1

### RATIONALE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

Let me tell you a story. I was attending a meeting held by the U.S. Forest Service Leadership Team in Region 1. That is to say, there was a large group of Forest Service managers gathered in a meeting room, and I was present, listening in as I contemplated whether this was a group of people I wanted to spend the next year studying.

During a break, I was chatting with one female leader when another approached. Upon introductions, and hearing about my interest in studying women and the Forest Service, this second female leader turned to me and said, "Have I got a story for you!" She proceeded into the following narrative:

...I was chit-chatting with somebody and the phone kept ringing and it was bugging us because we couldn't keep talking over this phone that was in between us. So I just picked it up and... [the man on the phone] said "I want to come visit". And I said, "Well... tell me a little bit about what you want to visit about" and he said, "Well, my dad was forest supervisor here between 1935 and 1945, and I'm up here for my 55<sup>th</sup> high school reunion. And I wanna come and talk to ya." And I said, "Fine, I'm open this morning. What would work for you?" He said "about 10:30."

So at 10:30... he comes in and he sits right where you're sitting. And he points at that door over there and he says, "You know, I come up every three years for my high school reunion. I was right here three years ago..." And I said, "Well, that's good... How'd it go?" And he said, "Well, I poked my head through that door right over there." And I said, "Really? And...?" He said, "Nothin' but girls. Nothin' but girls!" And I'm sitting back thinking to myself, "Ok... the next thing you say is gonna make or break this meeting." And he was a hoot... he said, "So where'd all the foresters go?" And I thought, "Oh, boy, here we go." And so I just looked at him and I said, "Well... you're lookin' at 'em. It'd be me! I went to forestry school!" And then he started laughing like you're laughing and we just got along famously.

But... he was testing me. He was testing me. He was 16 years old when his dad was supervisor here, and he spent two summers in a lookout, and everything he believes in, he learned those two summers in the lookout 55 years ago. It was neat. But now, the next time he won't have to test me. I told him he can just look me up and we can go out and give him a tour of the forest. 'Nothin' but girls.'

During the course of her telling me this story, the other female manager stood nearby listening. There was a distinct non-verbal nod at the end of the story, as though to say, "Wow, huh?" as both managers looked at each other and laughed.

Just then, it became obvious to me that this organization was certainly a viable option for my research, and that they would be willing to talk with me and share their stories. The U.S. Forest Service was clearly an environment of women and work that was worthy of study.

### **Rationale**

This is a study of women and work. More precisely, it is the study of female leadership in the U.S. Forest Service. The intent is to analyze the expressions of power, and attitudes about gender roles, as they are communicated through organizational narratives in an organization that only recently allowed women into its upper ranks.

As women become more a common part of organizations, so that the gender distribution is more integrated, rather than strictly male-dominated, it becomes possible to investigate and analyze the communicative interaction of the people involved. The question arises concerning whether women challenge or embrace the organizational practices they are becoming more a part of. The



longer women are in the work force, the stronger their presence in leadership positions becomes. Going into this study, I thought that an analysis of the discourse in a gender-integrated work environment might be useful in providing insight into the strategies now being used by women to manage those environments and decision-making positions. Such an analysis has the potential to reveal power-related, communicative, and decision-making strategies that women have undertaken in order to function effectively.

As a center of study, the U.S. Forest Service offers a special and useful venue for data gathering. Only forty years ago, women were unable to work for this organization due to qualifications, such as education, that were unavailable to them. In Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service, which covers a large portion of the northwestern United States, including Montana and parts of Idaho, Wyoming, and the Dakotas, and where this study is proposed to take place, fully 24% of the executive positions are held by women.

This study asks what organizational stories reflect about the perspectives on female leadership within the U.S. Forest Service. It is possible that organizational stories may include subtle aspects of organizational life that the people may not otherwise be articulating. Narratives gathered were analyzed in an attempt to derive information concerning the organization's ideology (or ideologies) of power, or sets of beliefs and attitudes about the nature and function of power in the organization. It was expected that more than one power structure would be revealed, as most large organizations are usually composed of multiple cultures, power structures, and belief systems (Young, 1989).

Through examination of the organization's dominant and alternative (or competing) ideologies of power, the organizational narratives were further analyzed to learn the values, attitudes, and beliefs they expressed concerning leadership styles, roles, the gendered nature of those roles, control, hierarchy, and communicative strategies. It was hoped that analysis of the organizational stories that people share would elicit, both explicitly and implicitly, images of power relations. Such relations held the potential to further express the perspectives of the organizational members concerning their peer, superior, and subordinate interactions, indicating members' attitudes and values about those relationships and the organizational behaviors they all participate in. Analysis especially concentrated on the attitudes, values, and beliefs about women as leaders, gender relations, roles that people take, and communicative strategies utilized. It was anticipated that elements such as the parts various characters play in the stories, the context in which the story is shared, and the types of events the stories express would lead to a better understanding of the female role in a gender-integrated organization.

Theoretically, this study has potential for an insightful look at the strategies and attitudes that have emerged in an organization that has only recently, yet rather rapidly, modified its leadership structure to include more than a token number of women. With this more equal representation of genders, we are positioned to ask whether gender roles move to relationally symmetrical status positions, or if the historically prevalent hierarchical arrangement is maintained.

The information gathered in this study and the conclusions it offers may be useful to members of organizations in a practical sense. Analyzing the communicative strategies of women who are occupying executive positions in a gender-integrated organization may lead to a better understanding of how men and women can work together. It may also provide strategies of success for other organizations leaning towards an integrated population.

This chapter contains a review of recent literature concerning women and work, leadership, and power. The use of organizational narratives as a method of inquiry into deep aspects of organizational culture will also be explored. Next, the research questions around which this study is framed will be discussed. Chapter two presents the methodology for the research, including a defense of my critical-interpretive research posture, a framework that illustrates the requirements for an "organizational story," the data-gathering techniques that will be used, and the ways in which the narratives will be analyzed.

Chapter three submits the data analysis process, including the limitations of this study. In chapter four I present the analysis and interpretations of the collected data. Finally, in the fifth chapter, conclusions are drawn with respect to the U.S. Forest Service, the methodology, theory, and practical perspectives.

## **Review of Relevant and Recent Literature**

### **Women and Work**

The percentage of women that work outside the home in the United States is increasing. This has been the case across the last few decades, and while the rate of increase is declining, projections indicate that women will occupy very

close to half the labor force by the year 2006. At the same time, women are starting to fill more managerial and executive positions.

In 1970, 43.3% of all women in the United States participated in the labor force. In 1980, that number had increased to 51.5%. By 1997, it was up to 59.8%. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that female participation will continue increasing to 61.4% by the year 2006. (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998).

Within the labor force, the overall proportion of male participation has been decreasing. In 1980, men occupied 77.4% of the labor force. It reached 75% in 1997, and is projected to dip to 73.6% by the year 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998).

In 1986, women occupied 44.5% of the labor force. By 1996, their numbers had increased to fill 46.2%. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that women will occupy 47.5% of the labor force by the year 2006 (Fullerton, 1998).

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (1999) and the U.S. Census Bureau (1998), women are occupying more managerial and executive positions. In 1983, women held 41 percent of managerial and professional jobs, and 32 percent of executive, administrative, and managerial positions. By 1997, those numbers had grown to 49 percent and 44 percent, respectively.

These statistics hold true as well for women employed by the U.S. Forestry Service. The number of women employed in Forestry and logging occupations increased from 1.4% in 1983 to 5.1% in 1997 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998). Under the occupation of Farming, Forestry, and Fishing Occupations,

women filled 11.2 percent of the jobs in 1983, increasing their numbers to 14 percent in 1998 (Department of Labor, 1999).

Women comprised 4.5% of the supervisors, forestry and logging workers across the United States in 1997 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997). In Montana, where Region 1 of the U.S. Forestry Service is centered and this study is focused, women held 15.0% of these positions (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997).

The present proposal is to study Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service. This region covers a large portion of the northwestern part of the United States, including Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, and a small portion of South Dakota. As part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Forest Service has faced enormous difficulties over the last three decades in integrating men and women in the upper echelons of the organization. Up until the 1960s, women were not eligible to work for the U.S. Forest Service. Today, 24% of Region 1 executives are female. In the Lolo National Forest, only one of the areas within Region 1, 38% of the employees are female. Across 30 years, the demographics of the organization have changed dramatically, mirroring changes in organizations across the United States.

Women's presence in the wage-earning working world has traditionally been less than that of men, both in numbers as well as in status. The statistics do reflect that women are becoming a more consistent and formidable presence. Still, as women become more common in the paid workforce, their position within organizational hierarchies has in many sectors changed only minimally.

Some changes to create a sense of equality between men and women in the job force have had a positive affect. For instance, the income differential has been greatly reduced. In general, women now earn 76% of men's income, up from 63% in 1979 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). However, in executive, administrative, and managerial level occupations, women only earn 68.4% of what men earn (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999), indicating distinct limits to the progress that has been made.

The number of women in managerial and professional occupations has also increased from 41% in 1983 to 49% in 1998 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). The number of Fortune 500 companies led by a female CEO has risen from one in 1996, to three as of 1999. In July, Hewlett-Packard Company, number 16 on the Fortune 500 list, became the largest company to be headed by a female CEO.

According to Carly Fiorina, the new female CEO of Hewlett-Packard, "there really is not a glass ceiling anymore" (AP, Missouliau, July 20, 1999,p.3). However, that is most likely a matter of perspective. A recent survey by Catalyst (1999), a nonprofit research and advisory organization, found female executives cited three issues they believe are maintaining the glass ceiling. The factors cited were (1) male stereotyping of women, (2) women's exclusion from informal communication networks, and (3) lack of experience in management positions. According to this survey, there remains a glass ceiling that holds many women back from attaining executive, decision-making positions.

The deficit of women in executive positions is partially the result of leader stereotypes, undermining their access to those jobs. Leadership qualities are stereotyped as “masculine”, indicating that attributes of dominance, rationality and objectivity are required in order for an individual to reflect appropriate elements of competence, status, and authority (Haslett, Geis, & Carter, 1992). Conversely, women are characterized as emotional, accommodating, and deferring, resulting in a lower, “feminine” status and perceived incapability of leading. “Leadership is more difficult for women, because they are seen as possessing the ‘feminine’ characteristics and as *not* possessing the ‘masculine’ ones” (Haslett et al, 1992, p.125). This viewpoint undermines a woman’s power and status because she is not expected to be as effective as her male counterparts.

Fagenson (1993) cites evidence that suggests that this feminine, or ‘softer’, style of democratic leadership that women engage in enables employee participation and reduces the impact of hierarchy, resulting in greater subordinate satisfaction. This form of management creates an environment where information, resources, responsibilities, and opportunities are shared, rather than competed for. Authority, viewed as a privilege and an obligation, is exercised carefully (Martin, 1993).

Especially because of gender labels and tradition, leadership strategies that men use are sometimes unsuccessful for women. This is particularly true for the military model of management that some corporations engage in (Fagenson, 1993). But that does not mean there isn’t something that does work for women.

Martin (1993) cites numerous studies claiming that female management strategies are more effective and humane than those of men.

Converse to these findings that suggest that men and women lead differently, the results of two meta-analyses indicated that while women were inclined to use more of a democratic style of leadership than men, the difference was small (Aries, 1998). Other assessments indicated that men emerged more frequently as leaders in task-oriented tests, while women emerged more frequently for social leadership assessment (Aries, 1998). Again, the difference was not a large one. Ultimately, the meta-analyses show that the difference between male and female styles is very small, indicating that the genders may actually be more similar than they are different in terms of leadership style. With this, the polarized depictions of gender differences is most likely unwarranted (Aries, 1998).

In fact, evidence suggests that differences in leadership and dominance have more to do with status than gender (Aries, 1998), so that sex differences are reduced when men and women are placed in equal status positions. "When dominance and leadership are legitimized for women in organizational settings, the behavior of male and female leaders is quite similar" (Aries, 1998, p.72). This suggests that the lower status positions that women are so often regulated to have more to do with stereotypes and less to do with ability or behavior.

While it has been determined that women do more than a satisfactory job at leading, how and where they fit within an organization's hierarchy, power structure, and ideological tenets, still must be dealt with. Few women attain the



rank of management. When they do, it is not uncommon for them to achieve a similar occupational position to a male, but still be undermined by pay, status, and power inequality. Martin (1993) suggests that the minimal progress of women into senior management positions is a result of executive occupations historically and “normally” belonging to men. This undermines women’s access to power. “Compared with (majority) men, women suffer disadvantages of authority, compensation, promotion, better jobs, and control over monetary and human resources” (Martin, 1993, p.276).

Additionally, a female manager’s mobility and opportunity is limited (Kanter, 1993; Fagenson, 1993). They tend to occupy positions in the lower or middle hierarchical levels where they have few financial resources, and make few final decisions. They manage other women, but have few male subordinates (Martin, 1993). This isolates women from access and execution of power, and status, limiting their organizational participation, as well as opportunities to excel and advance.

As women do gradually take on executive roles, office dynamics are changing. “Men are increasingly working with women as their peers, supervisors, and subordinates. Women managers have had an important impact on the nature of relationships at work...” (Fagenson, 1993, p.5). As the gender ratio in organizations change, systematic organizational factors such as sex role stereotypes, expectations, and organizational ideologies will be affected (Fagenson, 1993). “If the ratio of women to men in various parts of the organization begins to shift... forms of relationships and peer culture should also

change" (Kanter, 1993, p.209). We may expect that female ways of managing might become more acceptable, viewed as effective rather than deviant.

Similarly, the presence of women in executive positions may become more status quo, perceived as beneficial and, in fact, necessary, for efficient and effective organizational procedures, perspectives, and decision-making processes.

Scholars are divided between supporting a need for new organizations to embrace women on more equal terms with men, and supporting the ability for existing organizations to improve, including better flexibility and support for family responsibilities (Martin, 1993). While not mutually exclusive perspectives, these two approaches do not always coincide easily. In existent organizations, it may take recruitment and promotion of large groups of women into executive positions for their progress to be deemed successful (Kanter, 1993; Martin, 1993). This is a strategy intended to counter the negative affects of tokenism such as isolation, segregation, pressure and stress, low morale, and a sense of existing strictly as a symbol (Kanter, 1993), that occur when only a small number of women have risen to executive positions.

Other strategies to assist in the advancement of women may surface as researchers attend to an organization's patterns of discourse, potentially revealing elements that perpetuate women's gendered roles in organizations (Cheney et al., 1998), and clarifying how gender relations are maintained (Buzzanell, 1994). "Messages, structures, and practices offer contexts in which gender is constructed and socially negotiated" (Buzzanell, 1994, pg. 342).

Implicit messages from organizational narratives, and other symbolic forms of discourse, may act as linguistic devices that manage organizational meaning, delineating employee roles and maintaining gender expectations, thus undermining the intended and hopeful advancement of women (Cheney et al, 1998).

Such gender relations and roles are examined in Ely's (1994) study of East Coast law firms, half of which were gender-integrated and half of which were still dominated by male partners. Ely (1994) found that the larger percentage of women in executive positions resulted in females within the organization being more acceptable and accepted. "Women were able to use their identification with women partners as a source of validation and support" (Ely, 1994, p.228). Having a larger number of women successfully attain the level of partner communicated to junior women that it was an attainable goal regardless of their gender (Ely, 1994). Success, or lack there of, was perceived to be based on elements other than gender, so that supportive relationships among women were potentially constructive, and maybe even elemental, to continued success of women in those organizations (Ely, 1994).

The primary difference between male-dominated and gender-integrated firms was found to be that, in the former, women tended to "compare themselves directly with other women associates as a way of gauging their own success and relative opportunities for advancement. Women in sex-integrated firms did not show this tendency" (Ely, 1994, p.229). In the law firms that were led by mostly men with only a small percentage of female partners, junior women could not rely

on senior women for support, nor did junior women appear to respect their authority (Ely, 1994). In these organizations, gender was not an effective basis for identification (Ely, 1994). Rather, it potentially undermined a woman's perception of her ability to advance.

The situations and attitudes that Ely describes as existing within the male-dominated organizations conform to the definition of and response to tokenism, which occur in skewed groups where one type of person quantitatively dominates over another (Kanter, 1993). In such a case, the "token" individual(s) are subject to low opportunity and power (Kanter, 1993). Ely's study exemplifies the case of the token's inability to pave the way for others, or to act as role models for junior women.

Conversely, in gender-integrated organizations that contained approximately 15% female partners, women identified with female partners for both validation and support (Ely, 1994). In these cases, the number of women who had attained the level of partner served as a confirming element, indicating "that they too could become partners and that their sex per se would not pose a barrier" (Ely, 1994, p.228).

In the law firms where a larger number of women serve as partners, the senior women had power and control, and so were more acceptable and accepted. Enough women participated as peers and superiors to make their presence in the executive position more common than unusual. Because of this, their presence, positions, and status did not appear to be at risk like the token's situation did. Ely's study is indicative of the potential results of gender integration

in large organizations. As women become more a common element of the executive ranks, their power and control may become more equal to that of men in similar positions. "Changes in the demographic composition of the labor force are creating more opportunities than ever before for professional women to work with and for other women" (Ely, 1994, p.203). In many cases, this is due to women forgoing the patriarchal labor force to create their own business with their own rules. But even in existent organizations, women are gaining rank, becoming executives, and interacting more with men as their subordinates and executive peers.

The U.S. Forest Service may serve as an example of an organization where women have attained status beyond that of tokenism. In Region 1, the focus of this study, women now occupy 25% of the executive positions, as compared with 14% in 1990. As recently as 1976, this was a completely male occupation, not only in Region 1 but throughout the U.S. Forest Service (Albertson, 1993). Understanding what attitudes, values, and beliefs concerning female leadership are represented and articulated through the power structures that organizational narratives create and maintain in the U.S. Forest Service can lead to a greater understanding of the progress being made by women in the workforce.

### **Ideology, Power, and Narratives**

For this research, a working definition of the "ideology of power" is drawn from Mumby (1988), who examined "power as a structural phenomenon, both as a product of, and the process by which, organization members engage in

organizing activity” (p.55). That is, power is a function of the hierarchical structure of an organization. Also, power acts to structure or shape social situations. In this case, “ideology” refers to the basic, underlying organizational premises and values associated with organizational power, especially related to the role of women in managerial and leadership positions. Many of these ideas may be tacitly understood, but not always directly articulated. In a sense, then, by ideology of power in an organization, I mean to refer to lay, implicit, or everyday theories of power. For example, some members of an organization may see power as completely or chiefly tied up with position. Others may see it as associated with a person’s charisma and ability to get along well with people. As such, the ideology of power in an organization may both reflect and contribute to concrete power relationships (Mumby, 1988).

Expressions of control and status often serve to maintain the prevailing organizational norms, attitudes, and values. The communication strategies that are executed as a result of perceived hierarchical position may assist in maintaining that position. For example, when a manager gives an order to a subordinate, the expressed directive may be used in a way that assists in preserving the status differential. Similarly, the subordinate’s compliance with the order implicitly preserves the hierarchy, and may represent actual approval of it (or not).

This illustration also exemplifies the structural basis of power. As stated above, Mumby (1988) refers to power as “a structural phenomenon” (p.55). From this viewpoint, power is embedded in an organization’s hierarchical

structure. In the above example, the manager is able to draw his position within the power structure of the organization. Hence, it is through the “power structure” that orders are executed, decisions are made, and information is disseminated.

At the same time, power is an inherent dimension of social relations in general, and language use in particular, by which hierarchies of such things as values, concepts, and labels are established, maintained, and challenged or modified. For example, our same manager who gave the order will be in a position to set agendas for meetings by which certain discussion items are included, privileged, or excluded.

As Foucault (1978) observed about power, its mechanisms are perhaps strongest when masked. One way this is achieved is through the framing of an issue or a position as common sense. Working more specifically with the critical analysis of discourse, Fairclough (1984, p.33) writes: “Ideological power, the power to project one’s practices as universal and ‘common sense’... is exercised in discourse,” though in many cases basic assumptions about power are left implicit in messages or can only be discerned from large bodies of discourse.

Furthermore, and consistent with the above discussion, “power is not something that a person possesses, but is rather a relation among people” (Mumby, 1988, p.56). Again, this draws from Foucault’s perspective of power as residing in the network of interconnected relationships (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991). One should therefore be able to observe elements of the power between people by studying their discourse. Power is exercised and maintained through

combinations of coercion or consent (Fairclough, 1989). Thus, one may coerce a multitude under threats of duress, convince others that they simply agree to follow, or employ some amalgamation of the two (Fairclough, 1989). Exercising power through discursive strategies, such as organizational narratives, is an appeal for consent through formulating and depicting an ideology (Fairclough, 1989). Narratives can be used to express appropriate behavior and organizational standards not otherwise articulated in an organization's formal communication. (Witten, 1993).

Thus, narratives are communicative media through which power structures are expressed (Mumby, 1987). Stories carry both explicit and implicit meanings simultaneously. The detailed content expresses one set of action and beliefs. The story's moral and underlying meanings carry additional information for the organizational member to decipher. Typical communication strategies utilized by an organization can control discourse so that an idea is either framed as an issue, or prevented from being on the organization's agenda.

The present research examines this use of power primarily through two of the principal ideological functions as defined by Mumby (1987). First, the ideologies of power that are expressed through narratives articulate the key attitudes, values, and beliefs. Sometimes, the telling and retelling of a story can reify these elements, so they seem more solid and established for organizational members. Second, narratives function as a means of control over the members of the organization, including the member who shares the narrative. These two functions can result in "discursive closure," meaning that expressing a narrative



legitimizes the reality depicted, expressing it as the dominant perspective for organizational members, including the narrator (Deetz, 1992).

Power is thus an important tool for organization members in a variety of interactions, even in many storytelling episodes not thought to be power-laden. It “is central to the ongoing processes of creating and revising interpretive structures and is continually influenced by those processes” (Conrad, 1983, p.185 – emphasis his). Through communication, people monitor their environment and realign themselves with organizational expectations, such as those expressed through narratives. This allows and enables changing power structures, changing needs, and requirements of the organization and its members (Conrad, 1983).

This perspective aligns with Foucault’s view of power as shifting and moving, readjusting and balancing between unequal elements of domination and resistance (Foucault, 1978). It is the sense of power as changing and the actors as human that an interpretive approach to organizational communication can address, revealing “the complex communicative processes through which power relationships are established” (Conrad, 1983, p.175).

Through critical discourse analysis, it is possible to reveal and examine an organization’s dominant and alternative or opposing ideologies of power. “Power is most successfully exercised by those who can structure their interests into the organizational framework itself” (Mumby, 1987, p.119); that is, the use and transformation of dominant symbols within the organization places the user in a strong rhetorical position. Some recent research shows how employees at lower

levels of corporations are able to exercise power by relying on, yet subverting, the meanings in organizational mission statements (Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997).

Those alternative or opposing perspectives that rise to the surface are especially interesting because of their persistence despite the strength of the dominant ideologies. This indicates the pervasiveness of their viewpoints, and also will help identify the resistance to the dominant viewpoint. According to Foucault (1989), power cannot exist without some sort of resistance. It is, in fact, the resistance that enables the ebb and flow of power, encouraging it through struggle to move, restructure, transform, strengthen, and even reverse.

Narratives are one form of communication through which organizational power ideologies and structures are created, maintained, and transformed. Through examination of organizational narratives, key aspects of an organization's power relations can be made available for analysis, revealing both extrinsic and intrinsic messages about values, attitudes, and beliefs that lie deep within employee relations.

Narratives have been studied in connection with a variety of topics including organizational culture (Sillars, 1991; Myrziades, 1987; Martin & Powers, 1983; Wilkins, 1983), values (Meyer, 1995), organizational design, analysis, and change (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976; Feldman, 1990), discourse and power (Markham, 1996), interpersonal discourse (Jefferson, 1978; Ryave, 1978), sense-making (Boje, 1991), and coping strategies for stressful events (Talor, Aspinwall, Giuliano, Dakof, & Reardon, 1993). Humans are natural storytellers,

using narratives as a process of creating meaning and giving order to the human experience (Fisher, 1984). Organizational stories are considered a significant, pervasive part of organizational life (Martin, 1982; Brown, 1990; Feldman, 1990). They potentially affect employee perspective and behavior (Feldman, 1990). Studying organizational process through narratives is effective because “accounts potentially legitimate dominant forms of organizational reality” (Mumby, 1987, p.113), providing employees with an articulated expression of their organizational reality, which may compete with world-views. Studying narratives is ethnographic in that it is “based on the assumption that the ways in which individuals talk about their own lived experiences represent the best source of information about their own interpretations of the meanings of contexts” (Goodall, 1995, p.119).

Organizational narratives are “an especially powerful vehicle for the dissemination of ideological meaning formations” (Mumby, 1988, p.102). They can function ideologically in organizations as they produce and maintain, but sometimes challenge, power structures (Mumby, 1987). Additionally, narratives may reveal basic organizational assumptions that may not otherwise be articulated by employees because of the “deep structural” level in which the assumptions reside. Studying narratives may provide access to issues of power in this particular workplace that may otherwise go unexplored.

Thus, studying narratives in the U.S. Forest Service will serve to elicit dominant, alternative, explicit, and implicit power ideologies. In analyzing the power structures that are reflected in and produced by the narratives, the

organization's attitudes, values, and beliefs concerning female leadership can be determined.

### **Case: U.S. Forest Service**

The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service is the largest forestry research organization in the world, managing 19 million acres of national forests and grasslands across 44 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands (USFS, 1997). The National Forest System currently occupies 8.5% of the total land area in the United States (USFS, 1997). Established in 1905 by Congress, the mission of the U.S. Forest Service is to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people in the long run (USFS, 1997; Apple, 1996; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Kaufman, 1960). This organization has been described as unified, integrated, effective, professional, and one of the best managed government agencies" (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Apple, 1996; Mohai & Jakes, 1996; Kaufman, 1960).

One significant aspect of the U.S. Forest Service for this study is its historically male lineage. That is, the organization was characterized by employing only males until governmental policies from the 1960's and 1970's, plus affirmative action policies as mandated by the court systems, resulted in the hiring of more women into the U.S. Forest Service (Apple, 1997; Brown & Harris, 1993, Mohai & Jakes, 1996). It is only during the last 40 years that women have gradually joined the U.S. Forest Service at various levels, working on the front lines. Their progression into executive positions began in 1979 (O'Carroll, Freemuth, & Alm, 1996). "The advancement of women in Forest Service

positions is proceeding at an accelerated pace” (Brown & Harris, 1993) so that women in executive positions have usually been with the organization a shorter time than men of similar rank (Brown & Harris, 1993). The movement of women into executive positions is necessary in order to achieve the U.S. Forest Service’s goal of the personnel structure representing the American gender composition (Brown & Harris, 1993; Apple, 1996).

### **Studies of the U.S. Forest Service**

Studies utilizing the U.S. Forest Service as a central focus have concentrated on elements such as the organization’s culture, control strategies (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989), decentralization, organizational identification (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Hall, Schneider & Nygren, 1970), diversity (Brown & Harris, 1993), and induced identification through the use of newsletters (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). Bullis and Tompkins (1989) cite the U.S. Forest Service as an organization worthy of longitudinal study, because of its continuous use as an example in organizational research.

Kaufman’s (1960) classic study of the U.S. Forest Service addresses the organization’s decision-making processes, policy of decentralization, standardization of employees and training, and culture and control strategies, including how they relate to the use of language and symbols (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985; Apple, 1996; Mohai & Jakes, 1996). Kaufman stated that the purpose of his study was “to analyze the way their decisions and behavior are influenced within and by the Service” (1960, p. 4; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989). His work is often referred to in its analysis of the organization’s

decentralized decision and behavior processes (Kaufman, 1960), and organizational and culture control (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985).

Kaufman's study concluded that organizational control within the U.S. Forest Service was "concertive" and unobtrusive (Kaufman, 1960; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). This form of control utilizes an employee's sense of identification with the organization (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989), so that the member and the agency become more a part of each other (Kaufman, 1960; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). Control is more unobtrusive as it operates through compliance, so that decisions are seen to be in the best interest of the employee and the organization simultaneously (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989). Symbols, such as the agency's uniform, emblem, and Smokey the Bear, served to encourage this identification, binding Forest Service employees together in their perceptions and values (Kaufman, 1960; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989). This point seemed especially important going into this present study, as narratives may serve as a symbolic communicative tactic for concertive control.

Also important is Kaufman's (1960) assessment of organizational identification in the U.S. Forest Service, and the importance of members identifying with the organization in order to facilitate and enable the control and power structures in place. Tompkins & Cheney (1985) concur, stating that symbolic elements "contribute to a deep identification with and commitment to the organization" (p.197). The use of organizational stories within the power

structure of such a seasoned organization like the Forest Service is most likely prevalent and robust because of the concertive control strategies utilized in the recent past.

A 1989 study by Bullis and Tompkins, meant to reassess Kaufman's results longitudinally, found that the concertive style of control had been gradually replaced by an external, bureaucratic form of control that focused less on the identification of the employee with the organization (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989). The authors noted that the resulting bureaucratic control process requires more active, obtrusive control methods (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989). Both the culture and employee identification with the organization has weakened (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989). Decisions and control strategies are now communicated explicitly and obviously, rather than implicitly (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989).

While Bullis & Tompkins' (1989) study indicates a change in the U.S. Forest Service away from concertive and symbolic control, there still remain some elements of this less obtrusive strategy that Kaufman studied. Organizational members interviewed for this study expressed a desire to identify with the organization, and expressed some dissatisfaction with the change from concertive to bureaucratic control (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989). This sense of nostalgia for times past when organizational identification was stronger, added to the seasoned and decentralized nature of the agency, indicates that this is a culture that may express themselves through narratives (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). This likely presence of organizational stories made the U.S. Forest Service an especially enticing organization for this study.

With the addition of women into the organization, it was hoped that such narratives would indicate expressions of power, and attitudes about gender roles, in an organization that only recently allowed women into its ranks.

In her book Woods-Working Women: Sexual Integration in the U.S. Forest Service, Enarson (1984) examines life for women serving on the front lines, working side-by-side with men, explaining that when women first begin working, the process of testing and proving eventually results in the establishment of routines and tolerances. With this study, Enarson offers some potential strategies that U.S. Forest Service women might be employing in order to succeed at their jobs despite explicit discrimination. "Working with women in extraordinary places and ways loses its strangeness as the organization, district, and individuals all gain experience and perspective" (Enarson, 1984, p. 134).

She refers to the affects of tokenism when she says "the sex ratio of the work group is influential, for isolated women are easier targets, and the antagonism of co-workers is strengthened when other men share it" (p. 119). Enarson reports that successful woods-working women develop strategic responses to male resistance. Humor, passive resistance, and flexibility are strategies exerted by both men and women to help manage their work environment. Additionally, male friends and sponsors may help protect as shields from digs, biases, and gossip. Women may be able to draw on them for shared power. Finally, stories circulate about the women who previously worked with the group, giving current female workers a sense of what has come before, what they are up against, and how they fare in comparison (Enarson, 1984).



Going into this project, I thought that it might be possible that strategies such as these would be revealed as U.S. Forest Service executives discussed their experiences.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The American job market, and the U.S. Forest Service, has undergone change as women have entered the workforce. They have gained experience and advanced through the ranks, effecting change throughout the organizations they are involved in. This is especially true in the Forest Service, where women have advanced more quickly than men, in the agency's attempt to replicate the diversity of the American workforce.

Studying the attitudes, values and beliefs held in an organization towards female leadership may lead to a greater understanding of the overall progress being made by women in the workforce. Analyzing organizational narratives can serve as an especially useful tool for unearthing these organizational elements in a matured and seasoned organization such as the U.S. Forest Service. Organizational stories function ideologically to both produce and maintain such power structures (Mumby, 1987). Therefore, studying narratives in the U.S. Forest Service will serve to elicit both dominant and alternative power ideologies. In analyzing the power structures that are reflected in and produced by the narratives, the organization's attitudes, values, and beliefs concerning female leadership can be revealed and examined.

## Research Question

The primary research question reflects a search for the ideology (or ideologies) of power in the U.S. Forest Service as perceived by the people assigned to leadership positions within the organization and as expressed through their narratives. For the purposes of this study, "ideology" refers to the basic, underlying organizational premises and values associated with organizational power, especially relating to women in managerial and leadership positions. Some of these premises and values will be explicit, some implicit. "Power" refers not only to the traditional sense of achieving an intended goal overtly even against the resistance of others (Weber, 1968/1978), but also and especially to the ways key issues become suppressed, emerge, or are evident in how they are framed, shaped, and promoted. Hence, "power" for this study embraces to communicative strategies through which organizational actors inculcate organizational attitudes, beliefs, and values.

Through analysis of the organization's narratives, members' perceptions of the power structure, values, attitudes, and beliefs concerning female leadership, roles, the gendered nature of those roles, control, hierarchy, and communicative strategies were elicited. The organizational narratives that are required to provide answers to the research question established in this section were drawn from interviews. Ultimately, the research question asks what the narratives say, how they are told, and what they potentially accomplish, pragmatically speaking, in terms of their possible persuasive meanings and impact. This question is

posed in terms of investigating employee attitudes concerning women in leadership positions within the U.S. Forest Service.

**RQ: What do the organizational stories reflect about the dominant and alternative or opposing perspectives toward female leadership within the U.S. Forest Service?**

To answer this research question, narratives were analyzed for their reflection of the organization's ideology of power, exposing elements of values, attitudes, and beliefs concerning leadership styles, roles, the gendered nature of those roles, control, hierarchy, and communicative strategies. Internal elements to the narrative, such as the characters in the stories, differences among the characters and the roles they play, power as it is expressed in the narratives, and leadership strategies depicted were examined. Finally, the pragmatic effect of the organizational narrative was assessed, examining the story's impact on organizational views of power. Together, all of these internal and external elements depict what messages are expressed concerning prevalent or dominant and alternate or opposing perspectives toward female leadership in Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service. Throughout the investigation, I remained open to the possibility that there would be no single dominant perspective on or ideology of power in the organization.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **METHODOLOGY**

In the last chapter, the rationale for this study was presented, along with a review of relevant literature concerning gender, leadership, power, narratives, and the U.S. Forest Service. In this chapter, I first describe the philosophy behind the method of analysis chosen for this study. This is followed by a description of the narrative framework that was used to define the narratives utilized herein. Next, the organizational structure of the U.S. Forest Service is delineated, and current events that impacted the agency during the course of this study are briefly explored. Finally, the data collection and interview processes are discussed.

#### **Philosophy of Method**

I gathered and studied organizational narratives from Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the power ideology in the executive levels of the organization. Stories were analyzed for both explicit and implicit indications of values, attitudes, and beliefs associated with leadership styles, roles, the gendered nature of those roles, control, hierarchy, and communicative strategies. It was anticipated that analysis of the narratives would answer questions concerning dominant and alternate perspectives of female leadership in the organization, including the pragmatic effects of the stories.

For the purpose of effectively conducting both an internal and external examination, narratives were drawn through three different levels of analysis,

which built from a basic categorization of topics into a critical-interpretive perspective. At the beginning of the analysis, I stayed very close to the words and meanings of the participants' original narratives. As I moved through the next two levels of analysis, I became more interpretive, and then more critical as well. Through this process, I stepped further away from the words of the participants' stories and into a more abstract point of view through which values and ideologies could be better viewed. Throughout this, I worked to stay loyal to representing participants' diverse views through my interpretation, but at the same time allowed space for critical commentary.

Narratives were first analyzed through the viewpoint of the employees. Stories were thus initially studied with an intrinsic approach, in an attempt to utilize the terms and perspectives of the people that expressed them. The search, in this case, was for the messages that were relatively obvious to those inside the organization.

Next, the narratives were analyzed from an interpretive approach, allowing space for inferences and critical judgement. Stories were reframed to find underlying meanings that the participants were most likely less able to articulate because they are entrenched in the organization. In identifying themselves as part of the agency, organizational employees may very well be oblivious to the underlying meanings that are otherwise quite obvious to an external observer.

The final level of analysis draws on a more pragmatic point of view, as it steps away from the narrator's words and into the meaning behind the story being told. Through this, we learn more about the story behind the story.

Attention is paid to the meaning, the intent, and the underlying message.

Through this, we also learn about the actual or potential pragmatic effects of a message, and any value judgements it may convey.

Across these three levels of analysis, the view of the narratives collected gradually becomes more abstract, and the stories are eventually viewed in aggregate as they represent the experiences of the organizational members. From this, dominant and alternate or opposing perspectives of gender and leadership within this organization are revealed, showing the current standing of U.S. Forest Service leadership 30 years after women were admitted into the structure.

### **Narratives**

The purposes and functions of narratives within an organization have been researched in relation to how they are associated with socialization (Brown, 1985), culture, organizational politics (Mumby, 1987). "The research suggests... that a story should have a stronger impact on attitudes, such as commitment, than explicit forms of communication, such as abstract statements or statistics" (Martin, 1982, p.269 – emphasis hers). In studying discourse, organizational narratives, in particular, may prove insightful for determining the underlying values, attitudes, and beliefs of an organization.

"Stories are narratives which recount sequences of events" (Brown, 1985, p.28). Implicit in form, stories are a pervasive phenomenon, and an important part of organizing (Martin, 1982; Brown, 1990; Feldman, 1990). An organizational narrative may be presented as an individual's personal story that

is not widely disseminated. Conversely, the narrative may be in the form of a saga or myth. Frye (1957) defines a saga as an ongoing, multi-phasic story. They represent characters and events as having heroic attributes (Wilkins, 1983). Stories that are widely disseminated may take on mythical or legendary status (Martin, 1982, p.256), that may be ground truth or fantasy (Frye, 1957).

Narratives in the form of individual stories, sagas, or myths, define situations, helping people make sense of their environment (Brown 1985, 1990). In an organization, members use narratives as a means of expressing “their knowledge, understanding, and commitment to the organization” (Brown, 1985, p.38).

### **Narrative Framework**

Brown (1990) denotes the particular elements that, when drawn together, characterize the key elements of an organizational story. The criteria established includes a sense of temporality, three elements that make up a story grammar, and the ability to ring true and have relevance to the membership. These elements form the conceptual framework, or script, around which the story is built (Martin, 1982). “A script is the essential core, that is, the skeleton that makes an organizational story more than just a string of unique details” (p.284). If the alleged organizational story has the above ‘scriptal’ elements – a setting, plot, and central characters – then it can be classified as a story. Additionally, the narrative must be associated with the organization in order to be classified as an “organizational” story. It may be a narrative shared only with a few confidants, or disseminated throughout the organization. Each of these elements is further

delineated below, so that their individual nuances may be better understood. The narrative “Nothin’ but Girls,” from the beginning of this paper is utilized throughout this next section in order to better illustrate the elements described.

### **Key Elements of a Narrative**

#### **Temporality**

“Organizational stories reflect a sense of temporality” (Brown, 1990, p.165 – emphasis mine). The past is verbally recreated, but time may be manipulated so that the event may not be recounted in the exact order it originally occurred in (Brown, 1990). Additionally, ‘temporal slippage’ may be expressed through of a sense discord between the actual time that passed and what the time felt like.

For example, in the story “Nothin’ but Girls,” at the beginning of this paper, the narrator jumps from a phone call where she sets up the meeting to the meeting itself, when she says: “I said, ‘Fine, I’m open this morning. What would work for you?’ He said ‘About 10:30.’ So at 10:30... he comes in...”

#### **Story Grammar Elements**

A story normally includes an opening, or Preface, which orients the beginning and purpose of the story. This is followed by the Recounting Sequence, during which the plot and sequence of past events are revealed. The Closing Sequence transitions the storyteller from the narrative back into the flow of conversation by resolving the story and providing a sense of closure. This is often accomplished by means of a moral, explaining how the story relates to the current conversation (Brown, 1990). Morals “may vary, depending on who is



listening to the story, why that particular story is being told, and who is telling it” (Martin, 1982, p.256).

For example, the story about “nothin’ but girls” was poignant to both the woman who told the story, and her female counterpart, as women in a traditionally male organization. They laughed immediately, and shared knowing looks, understanding implicitly the humor of the narrative. Conversely, an outsider may find the point unclear, and require some clarification of the organization’s history and historically patriarchal management.

### **Relevance for the Membership**

Stories must be relevant to the group members who share the experiences or reality. This element is determined primarily by the audience (Brown, 1990). A story that concentrates on a “topic that is told, understood, and appreciated by the body of the membership” (Brown, 1990, p.168) would be considered relevant. A story is “organizational” when it relates members to their organization.

For example, the “Nothin’ but Girls” story concerns a female forester’s experience as a supervisor within the U.S. Forest Service, making the story distinctly organizational in nature. It indicates attitudes and situations that female foresters may need to confront in their positions as women in the organization.

### **A Ring of Truth**

Stories carry a ring of truth for the members, making sense within their organizational context (Brown, 1990). Again, this element is subject to the audience’s impression of the story. In this case, the listener must decide if the

story makes sense within the context of the organization (Brown, 1990). For the “Nothin’ but Girls” narrative, the ring of truth was determined most obviously by the second female forester who stood by listening, then shared a look and a laugh at the end of the story. Her response exemplified her acceptance of the story being reflective of how the organization appears to operate for her.

Truthfulness may reside in concrete evidence, statistics, and how well the story fits the listener’s perception of the organization (Brown, 1990).

### **Organizationally Oriented**

It is key, for the purpose of this study, that organizational narratives collected are about the employees interaction with their occupational position, events, peers, subordinates, supervisors, and the organizational environment in general. While all types of stories are important, this study is intent on studies shared either between a few confidants or shared widely within organizational boundaries.

### **Summary of the Key Elements**

As shown throughout this section, the story presented at the beginning of this study illustrates how these different elements work together to define whether a particular narrative is applicable to this research. According to the narrative criteria, this story must contain the following criteria:

- A sense of temporality
- The three elements of a story grammar
- Ring true to the membership
- Have relevance to the membership
- Be organizationally oriented.

With all of the criteria present, this narrative can be considered an “organizational story” worthy of further analysis.

### **Case: The United States Forest Service**

As stated in the previous chapter, the U.S. Forest Service is historically male-dominated. Women began entering the agency in other than secretarial positions approximately 40 years ago. The first female leader was put in place in 1976. Governmental policies, including Affirmative Action policies and California’s Consent Decree in the 1970s, have been instrumental in accelerating the advancement of women in Forest Service positions (Brown & Harris, 1993; Mohai & Jakes, 1996; O’Carroll, Freemuth, & Alm, 1996; Brown & Harris, 1993).

The recent advancement of women in the Forest Service is what makes it such an ideal organization for this study. The women in upper level positions today were joining the agency just over 20 years ago, amidst or in the wake of the Consent Decree. They have been with the organization during the transference from male-dominated to gender-integrated.

### **The Organizational Structure**

There are four executive levels in the U.S. Forest Service’s decentralized organizational structure (USFS, 1997; Kaufman, 1960; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989). A diagram of the organizational structure can be found in Appendix A. At the national level, also known as “the Washington office” (USFS, 1997, p.1), the Chief of the Forest Service presides (USFS, 1997; Kaufman, 1960). Reporting to the Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment in the USDA, the Chief works with the Presidential administration, developing budgets and

advising Congress on the Forest Service's accomplishments (USFS, 1997). The national level is the only executive rank that will not be represented in the present study. This is primarily because, as a decentralized organization, responsibility and decision-making activities are delegated to the forest supervisors and rangers (Kaufman, 1960). Hence, this study will concentrate on the regional and district executive levels that have the power to directly affect and reflect attitudes, values, and beliefs interactively with other organization members.

At the Regional Level, nine regional foresters report directly to the Chief (USFS, 1997; Kaufman, 1960). Responsibilities at this level include coordination and monitoring of activities between national forests, and managing budgets and forest plans (USFS, 1997). "Each of the regional foresters is responsible for all the functions of the Forest Service, except research, within his own region" (Kaufman, 1960, p.43).

One step down the hierarchy, forest supervisors lead the National Forest level of management. The supervisors, who coordinate district activity, technical support, and allocate budgets, manage 155 national forests and 20 grasslands.

Finally, district rangers report to the forest supervisors. The district is "the smallest geographical subdivision in national forest administration, and the district rangers who head them are the lowest-ranking professional officers commanding administrative units" (Kaufman, 1960, p.47). Responsibilities at this level include trail construction and maintenance, operating campgrounds, and managing vegetation and wildlife (USFS, 1997).

Individuals occupying one of these four executive levels of authority in the U.S. Forest Service are considered to be "line officers." Any employee not part of this management line is considered to be "staff" (Apple, 1996; Mohai & Jakes, 1996). "Each line officer has a professional, technical and clerical staff" (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989). It is more likely that line employees hold a degree in forestry, and have been with the organization longer than other types of employees (Apple, 1996; Mohai & Jakes, 1996). Because of this, line employees may be more socialized into the U.S. Forest Service norms and traditions than staff employees, and more pressured to conform (Apple, 1996; Mohai and Jakes, 1996).

As stated above, women of executive standing have usually been with the Forest Service a shorter amount of time than men in the same hierarchical position and they most likely moved into their jobs more quickly than their male counterparts (Brown & Harris, 1993). At the same time, executives have a tendency to be more socialized into the organizational norms because of their time in the agency as well as the pressure of their rank (Apple, 1996; Mohai and Jakes, 1996). Therefore, it will be interesting to see if there remain gender differences in the depictions of leadership, as viewed through the narratives of executive employees.

### **Current and Relevant Events**

During the three and one half months that the interview portion of this research took place, there were a number of issues that were gathering a lot of public attention, and subsequently fell into the forefront of the U.S. Forest Service

agenda. While most of the topics fell outside the main focus of this study, participants often referred to these issues, which appeared in local and national newspapers frequently during the interview timeframe. For the sake of clarification, some of the key current events are explained in this section, drawing primarily on newspaper articles to underscore important details.

## **Recreation**

### **Motorized Vehicles in Wilderness Areas**

In the early months of 2000, there were a number of incidents in the northwestern states where public citizens disregarded restrictions of motorized vehicles in national forest wilderness areas. The various trespassings resulted in a variety of legal dilemmas.

In March 2000, a helicopter pilot was fined \$500 for illegally landing a helicopter in the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness Area (AP, 2000, March 12). Also in March 2000, a logging contractor broke his leg in a snowmobile accident inside the Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana, requiring him to be rescued by helicopter. There was a group of snowmobilers in the area at the time of the accident, but only the injured logger had been identified upon publishing of the article (Rescued snowmobiler, 2000). "Entering a wilderness area with a motorized vehicle can lead to a maximum \$5,000 fine, a year in jail, and seizure of the vehicle involved" (Rescued snowmobiler, 2000, p.2).

In April 2000, four Wyoming snowmobilers appeared in court and were ultimately fined \$500 each for entering a National Forest wilderness area that had been marked to prohibit snowmobile access (AP, 2000). Allegedly, the

snowmobilers removed the posted signs before entering the wilderness area. They could have been charged up to \$5,000 in fines and required to serve up to six months in jail for these actions.

### **“Multiple Use”**

The motorized vehicle and snowmobile issues are just one part of the larger topic of “multiple use” for national forest recreation. There are many consumers and various sides to what is considered “appropriate use” of the national forests. The space that snowmobiles travel on in winter may not be compatible for use by motorized vehicles in summer; Folf (Frisbee-golf) courses in spring become cross-country skiing trails in winter, and civilians are then asked by Forest Service personnel to respect the timeliness of those uses (Devlin, 2000b). The same land may also be used for logging, or it may require protection for the wildlife that resides there. As opinions and preferences clash, the topic becomes more convoluted and Forest Service personnel is required to step in and make decisions.

Recreation management in national forests has been authorized since the 1960 Multiple-Use-Sustained Yield Act (Frome, 1984). “The 1976 National Forest Management Act provided guidelines and further authorization to include recreation in multiple-use management” (Frome, 1984, p. 141). Since then, the Forests Service has been responsible for labeling appropriate areas for different types of recreation, making necessary decisions, and regulating that use.

The recreation and motorized vehicles situations reported in local newspapers demonstrate the diversity of responsibility the Forest Service works

with. The Forest Service is no longer only about "getting the cut out." In fact, the amount of logging has decreased to the point where mills have been and are closing, and professional loggers are in search of work. And so it was that a logger parked his logging truck in front of a Montana District Ranger Station, vowing to remain there until he had been given work. To the reporter, the logger explicitly stated, "There are no logging jobs available" (AP, 2000c, B3). The ranger explained that he was aware of "the bind small operators are in as the number of small timber sales declines, and the competition for federal timber gets more intense" (AP, 2000c, B3), but there are regulations that the federal government is required to follow, which prohibits him from bending to the protesting logger's will.

### **Marijuana Plantations**

In August of 1999, about one-half hour outside of San Bernardino, California, on two acres of the San Bernardino National Forest, Forest Service agents set ablaze an illegal marijuana plantation (Arrillaga, 2000). The event is not overly unusual. Areas of national forests often serve as illegal plantations because "the land is fertile, remote and free. There's no risk of forfeiture; plantations are difficult to trace; growers have land agents outmanned, outspent, and outgunned" (Arrillaga, 2000, A1).

However, the environmental damage that the growth and burning of the marijuana plantation does to the national forest is not quick to repair itself. People who live in the forests to tend to the marijuana gardens cut out areas for themselves amidst the trees, further disrupting the natural growth of the



vegetation. Pesticides and poisons are used to help the plants and deter animals from going near the plants.

“Despite a decline in the number of Forest Service agents, the amounts of marijuana seized on national forest land has increased” (Arrillaga, 2000, A1). In 1995, less than 600,000 pounds were seized. In 1999, the amount had increased to nearly one million pounds. The largest total amounts of marijuana were seized from national forests in California, Kentucky, Utah, North Carolina, and Michigan. At a sum of 995,126 pounds, it was more than the U.S. Customs Service seized in the same year.

### Oil Pipeline

In 1999, the Yellowstone Pipeline Company approached the federal government with a request to reroute their pipeline in western Montana after they lost their “right of way across the Flathead Indian Reservation because of past spills, leaks and environmental damage” (Devlin, 2000, A1). Delays in the plan to reroute the pipeline resulted from many factors, including public concern over the company’s environmental irresponsibility and potential impact on the land that other pipeline routes would cover (Devlin, 2000). One of the three proposed routes crossed large parcels of national forest land, thus involving the Forest Service in the pipeline issue. Because of Forest Service involvement, the law required public input. This enabled community objection to delay the rerouting proposals even further. Eventually, the Yellowstone Pipeline Company withdrew their request for a reroute (Burton, 2000).

### **Harassment in Nevada**

In November 1999, the Forest Supervisor for Nevada's Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest abruptly resigned her position, citing harassment, intimidation, and verbal abuse against local U.S. Forest Service employees by both the public and timber industry advocacy groups (Chereb, 2000; Jamison, 2000). It was more than three months before an investigative team representing the U.S. Forest Service could confirm that dozens of agency workers had definitely experienced harassment (Sonner, 2000), including threats of physical violence, refusal of service, and public ridicule (Sonner, 2000b). However, this information was not made public until after the Nevada community and timber industry advocacy groups had publicly challenged and decried Flora's stories (Jamison, 2000).

Connected to this harassment issue was turmoil regarding a washed out road on national forest land in Nevada. Conflict over the priority of property rights verses protection of threatened bull trout only served to increase tensions between the public and federal employees (Sonner, 2000).

Heated public debate concerning these topics took place in a number of northwestern states, including Montana, during the timeframe that interviews for this research took place. Stress and concern about both the resigning Forest Supervisor, and the tensions between the public and national employees over public land and ecological issues, was evident in most of the interviews that were conducted for this study. For example, one male forester discussed the situation as follows:

I don't know if you've heard this yet. One of the concerns that was raised down there in [Nevada] is that... people in the community and the county were withholding services to some of their people, like certain restaurant service, and hotel service and stuff like that... The Forest Service sent out a review team to take a look at that a few weeks ago. They couldn't find anything.... And all of a sudden, low and behold, somebody uncovered a letter that the district attorney had written in 1998, and requested that people within the community withhold basic services from federal employees, including the Forest Service and others. One interviewee cited the environment in Nevada as a reason why she is

cautious about telling people she works for the Forest Service:

Thirty years ago, I would have been very proud to tell anybody who I worked for, what I did, whatever. Today, I'm very cautious about who I say that to, because, I don't know if it's the radical environmentalist I'm talking to... and I know it's not me, it's what I represent, that the animosity is. But I do find myself being a little more cautious of what I'd say about what I do... It's evolved over a period of time. I think Nevada hit the height over the last couple years.

Consistently, participants stressed that the harassment in Nevada was not new, and in fact had occurred periodically across a number of years. One interviewee spoke of having been located in Nevada during similar violent events. Another explained that the harassment was "...not new news on the Humbolt-Toiyabi. Those things have been going on for quite some time."

The point of contention amongst the Forest Service employees seemed to be less about whether there was active harassment, and more about the appropriateness of the female Forest Supervisor for that area stepping down from her post. One employee explained why she disagreed with the Forest Supervisor's decision:

It's sort of like the titanic hit an iceberg and the captain was the first one off into a lifeboat, and saying, "I'm doing this for you... It's for your own good," as the ship goes down... It's left those people in a

horrible situation and its left the next forest supervisor who went there in a very, very difficult situation...

Another participant conveyed a similar point of view, when they stated, "she left 200 employees working on the Humbolt-Toiyabi that can't walk away. And I don't know that this is going to solve the problem."

There were also Forest Service members who agreed and even admired the actions of the resigned Forest Supervisor. One person explained:

...The ultimate in personality, value clashes, I think, happened and compromised her ability to lead in that organization, and to deal with the publics. Hindsight is 20-20. I don't know how she could have pulled out of that situation any differently. Maybe it was just the way the messages were being delivered to them... that probably undermined a lot of her support.

Overall, it seemed that most people were torn between the level of responsibility that the resigned Forest Supervisor's actions depicted, and the helplessness of the situation she was trying to fix. One participant articulated this split when they stated, "she kind of left the employees high and dry. On the other hand, she very effectively called attention to a problem. A real problem."

### **Roadless Initiative**

On October 13, 1999, the Clinton Administration launched a land preservation effort that focuses on restricting the creation of roads in backcountry forestlands. Termed the "Roadless issue" or "Roadless initiative," the restriction was intended to protect 54 million acres, equaling 28 percent of the 192 million acres of forest land in the National Forest System in North America (Office of the Press Secretary, 1999b; USDA, 2000). The U.S. Forest Service was placed in charge of analyzing the roads in the national forests and determining which

existing roads will be restricted from further use and maintenance, and what other areas that are currently roadless will remain that way. The Roadless initiative was meant primarily to extend a previous moratorium on building new roads (Office of the Press Secretary, 1999), enabling the U.S. Forest Service to evaluate long-term management options, and propose a rule that both protects previously inventoried "Roadless" areas, as well as smaller areas that have low-use roads that are difficult to maintain (Office of the Press Secretary, 1999; AP, 2000b). "The proposed rule would ban road building in these areas and could also prohibit logging or other activities that harm their unique ecological values. The Forest Service aims to release the proposed rule this spring and, following extensive public input, adopt a final rule in late 2000" (Office of the Press Secretary, 1999, p.1).

While the initiative was presented by the Presidential Administration as having minimal impact on the majority of national forests, the subject became a topic of contention in the Northwest where many national forests are clustered and highly accessed for both logging and recreation activities.

Opponents to the initiative seem to mostly be threatened by the vagueness of the plan. In the state of Montana, the governor spoke out publicly against the Roadless initiative (Anez, 2000, B1). While roadless does not mean "no access," there is fear in this northwestern state that the rights of the state and private citizens to access their own property may be inhibited because so much is surrounded by national forestland (Anez, 2000). Similarly, there is concern amongst snowmobilers, hunters, campers, and others who rely on forest access

that their right to use the national forests would be curbed (Missoulian editorial, 2000).

Conversely, supporters of the Roadless initiative are arguing that opponents are attempting to delay procedures. They believe that "stalling the environmental study on the Roadless plan would kill it, because the Clinton administration would leave office before it could be adopted" (Anez, 2000, B1).

By law, the Forest Service is required to take public comment on an issue over a set amount of time. In the case of the Roadless initiative, there was a 60-day comment period over which about one half-million comments were received (Sonner, 2000). After this time, "Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck acknowledged... there is strong opposition to President Clinton's proposal to protect tens of millions of acres of Roadless areas in national forests" (Sonner, 2000, A2).

As of this writing, the Forest Service has opened up talks so that the general public can participate in the decision-making process concerning the Roadless Initiative (USDA, 2000). This process has resulted in large and loud demonstrations in the urban areas of the region this study focuses on, especially in the city where the regional office is located (Devlin, 2000c).

### **U.S. Forest Service Workforce Plan**

The U.S. Forest Service Workforce Plan was published and distributed internal to the agency near the end of 1999. About one-third of the way through my data collection, one of my participants gave me a copy of the report. It was a useful document to have because the statistics it presents are recent, local, and

official. It enabled me to verify and clarify the data that my other interviewees discussed.

This document offers an internal view of the agency, laying out demographics and internal statistics for the purpose of providing "the Forest Service with a strategy to manage the transition of its workforce to meet the needs of the next five years" (USFSWP, p.4). The data for this report was collected in May of 1999, and represents a national scope of the agency (USFSWP, p.4).

Two key points from this document that participants mentioned were that a large portion of the agency's workforce is approaching retirement age, and that only a very small number of employees are between the ages of 20 and 30.

According to the Workforce Plan, the exact statistics are as follows:

- In 1992, 33% of the workforce was between the ages of 25 and 34.
- In 1999, only 10% of the workforce fell between the ages of 25 and 34.
- From 1992 to 1999, the percent of employees over the age of 45 increased from 9% to 12%.
- "In the next five years, 50 percent or more of the leadership team in key areas will become eligible to retire" (USFSWP, p.7).

The report also highlighted the organization's diversity status:

- As of May 1999, white women comprised 32.5% of the permanent workforce population. This has not changed since the last study in 1992, despite a dramatic employee reduction.
- "Diversity goals are not being met" (USFSWP, p.7).
- Hiring limitations are hampering diversity improvements (USFSWP, p.126).
- Workforce plan recommendation: "Develop strategies to build the pipeline of minority and women candidates in the disciplines it will be hiring" (USFSWP, p.7).

The Workforce Plan was occasionally referred to during interviews, and some interviewees cited the statistics, as the following examples show:

- “Right now, we have a very high percentage of our employees are going to be eligible to retire within 5-10 years, like... 60-70%.”
- “...very few people under 30. I mean, probably out of a 30,000-person organization, I’ll bet there’s under 200 people that are less than 30 that are professionals.”
- “So you think, if the average is 48, and 55 is where you can retire, that means that 50% of our employees are gonna retire in 7 years.”
- “I can’t remember what they said our median age was, but it was like the mid- to upper-40’s. I think, in the whole agency, I think I’ve heard that we employ like 40 thousand people? 10 thousand? I lose numbers, but less than 100 people are in their 20’s in the Forest Service.”

Some other pieces of information that the Workforce Plan offers are worthy of note. Although no participants discussed these next findings as related to this report, some did tell stories that reflect the plan’s findings. The topics and issues as they are mentioned in the Workforce Plan are as follows:

- Shortage of staff to fill existing positions:
  - “a number of key managerial/supervisory positions in headquarters and the field have remained unfilled for extended periods of time, with staff rotating into the positions in an acting capacity. This practice has resulted in a lack of continuity, sustained leadership, and program initiative and direction” (USFSWP, p.38).
- Generalized versus specialized occupations:
  - “...the emphasis on ecosystems management... will require staff to acquire not only an expanded technical understanding of other disciplines, but improved skills in the areas of team building, collaboration, and communication” (USFSWP, p.41).
  - “The forester remains the most populous professional occupation in organizational programs, with almost three times the number of staff as the next most populous occupation, general biologist” (USFSWP, p.45).



- The reports indicates an increase in specialization over the past years, and notes that specialization needs to increase because natural resource management is growing in complexity (USFSWP, p.55).

I found the workforce plan to be useful in supporting and clarifying some of the statistical information that interviewees were reporting. Their ability and tendency to refer specifically to this information indicated a sense of relevance and immediacy of the information as it pertains to their experiences within the agency.

### **Summary of Current and Relevant Events**

While primarily outside the main focus of this study, each of the current events explained above distinctly impacted the interviews that were conducted for this study. For example, some participants discussed the recent events in Nevada, including their own perception of the situation and how it has impacted their own leadership beliefs. Similarly, the Roadless initiative was used as an example of how the central offices within the Forest Service have recently taken a stronger position for dictating how certain processes should be engaged in at the local level. Two participants spent some time discussing the issue of marijuana plantations in the California National Forests, and how that situation has impacted events within their organizational experiences. Each of the current events that were discussed during interviews was also reported on in local newspapers during the data collection timeframe. It is from those newspaper articles that most of the facts herein are drawn.

## Data Collection

### Initial Observations

#### Pilot Interview

As a pilot study, I conducted a one-hour interview with a high-level female manager in the U.S. Forest Service. The purpose of the single pilot interview was, first and foremost, to determine how receptive Forest Service personnel would be to my inquiries. Secondly, I needed to learn more about the Forest Service culture and organization structure in order to establish an interview plan to fit their configuration.

The pilot interview schedule can be found in Appendix B. The questions asked focused on the forester's professional progression during her time with the Forest Service, what life was like for her in the agency, and her interaction with her immediate networks. Hence, the questions I posed included the following:

- What is your position here?
- What other positions have you held with the forest service?
- What is it like to be a woman in this organization?
- What other Forest Service employees do you most frequently interact with?

This interview was very useful to me, in that it showed not only the viability of this research idea, but also the willingness of the Forest Service to participate in my study. Specifically, the manager I spoke to expressed extreme interest in my topic, stating that the results would be useful for the organization. She was certain that the other managers would be both willing and able to meet with me for the anticipated one to two hour interviews that this study would require. She

then invited me to a Lead Team meeting the following month to meet most of the other Forest Service managers in the region that I would need to interview.

### **Lead Team Meeting**

As explained in the introduction, I briefly attended a Leadership Team meeting being conducted for the supervisors and directors of Region 1 of the Forest Service while still contemplating the plan for this project. The meeting was held on my college campus, so access was easy.

While at this meeting, a female forester told me the “Where are all the foresters?” story that appears at the beginning of this paper. It was during that conversation that the decision to do this project was cemented. That the Forest Service members I was talking were only aware of my interest in researching their organization in terms of female leadership, and not of my search for narratives, makes the collection of this first narrative especially interesting. The forester’s almost instinctive move to approach me with a story that exemplified her experiences was indicative of the environment’s narrative possibilities.

This first story was used earlier in this study to show different elements that make up an organizational narrative. Here, it is useful here as an example of the residual “newness” of female supervisors in the Forest Service, even though there have been female managers in this agency since 1976. Twenty-four years later, they are still breaking new ground.

### **Scheduling Interviews**

The goal of the interviews, as the primary data-gathering tool, was to garner organizational stories in a setting that could be recorded on audio tape.

enabling the story analysis to be based on the actual wording put forth by the storyteller. Interviews took place between the beginning of January and the middle of April 2000. Most were scheduled approximately one week in advance. All scheduled interviews were pre-arranged over the phone, and in most cases, one to one-and-one-half hours were blocked out for the interview. When scheduling, I usually talked to the actual forester that I would be interviewing. For managers at the regional level and some at the forest supervisor level, I worked with the administrative assistant to schedule a time.

Originally, I had also planned on spending some observation days with my participants. However, the data collection timeframe was scheduled during the snowy and cold winter season, during which interaction between foresters was minimal. Access was often hampered by foul weather. While the observations, therefore, did not actually take place, some key informal conversations did lead to useful information.

### **Informal Chats**

Early in the process of arranging interviews, there were cues that indicated elements that I would later find in the interviews. For example, while speaking with one of the Administrative Assistants, she asked if I intended to ask questions about the impact of the Forest Service on the manager's family. I hadn't been planning on doing so, but noted it as potentially useful. This later turned out to be a valuable lead in the process of determining what questions to ask during the interviews. I found that even if I didn't ask, interviewees often referred to their family experiences as they related to the Forest Service. Thus,

early in the interview process, the subject of the Forest Service impact on family became a question in the interview schedule.

Also, upon hearing the topic of my research project, another of the Administrative Assistants stated that women are being integrated quickly into the Forest Service. According to this assistant, the level of Deputy Regional Forester, of which this region has one, is the highest position that women have so far achieved. Female integration is lagging in Fire Management, specifically. She was not sure why, except that perhaps women didn't want to live the life that such a job would require. For example, in such a job they would need to respond to morning phone calls to leave immediately at six a.m. to go away for 21 days to a distant location, such as California. That would impact their family life in ways that might be unacceptable.

These specific examples show that even while arranging interviews, the viability of this project was becoming clear. Even without asking direct questions, information pertaining to my study was being offered. Additionally, the interest of Forest Service members supported their willingness to participate in my study.

### **Participant Selection Goals and Guidelines**

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Gender                         | Equal representation                          |
| 2. Management position            | Equal representation, both "line" and "staff" |
| 3. Time in position               | Equal gender representation                   |
| 4. Distribution across the region | Within financial and time limitations         |
| 5. Availability                   |   |

A stratified, representative sample of participants was selected according to the above criteria. The easy part of searching for participants came in

selecting which women to interview. Because women make up only 25% of Region 1's management team, only one woman in the upper levels of management (Deputy Regional Forester, Forest Supervisor, Director) was not interviewed. To ensure accurate representation of the region, the one woman with less than one year in her assigned position was excluded from the interview process. All other females at that level were interviewed, and thus served as elemental criteria for the male selection.

I matched males to females initially based on the similarity of management positions. Hence, for every female Forest Supervisor, there was a male Forest Supervisor. One key criterion in this match was the attempt to choose male participants who had an equal amount of time in position relative to their female counterparts. This was important because women have only been in Forest Service management since 1976. Thus, their time in service is not necessarily as extensive as their male counterparts. As explained in the literature review, female Forest Service executives have usually been with the Forest Service a shorter amount of time than their male counterparts that are in the same hierarchical position. The female managers in this region averaged around 22 years in service while the males averaged closer to 30 years. Therefore, males that were close to retirement age were not first choice for interviews, since they would not reflect similar time in service to the women already chosen.

In terms of distance, because Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service is spread across the entire state of Montana, and includes parts of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Idaho, it was not always reasonable to conduct interviews

face-to-face. Therefore, some interviews were conducted and recorded via telephone. To ensure quality communication despite the lack of non-verbal cues, these interviews were not conducted until more than half of the other interviews had taken place. With this, the interview process had become fairly standardized and the probing questions flowed more naturally. Additionally, by this time I had begun to understand the Forest Service culture and terminology more readily, so that the interviewee's answers required minimal clarification.

### **The Participants**

The lowest level of supervision interviewed was District Ranger on a forest, and the equivalent supervisory position within the regional office. The highest level interviewed was the Regional Forester. The titles within this range include Regional Forester, Deputy Forester, Forest Supervisor, Director, Forest Ranger, and Supervisor. Charts of the U.S. Forest Service and Region 1 organizational structures, and levels of supervision interviewed can be found in Appendixes A, C, and D, respectively.

Originally, I planned to execute 39 interviews. This was an attempt to equally represent all specialties and responsibility levels of the management structure in Region 1 of the Forest Service. This sampling would have consisted of one Regional Forester, two Deputy Foresters, six Forest Supervisors, six Directors, 12 Forest Rangers, and 12 Supervisors. The actual number of interviews conducted was 28, and included one Regional Forester, two Deputy foresters, five Forest Supervisors, five Directors, ten Forest Rangers, and five Supervisors. The reduced number of interviews occurred due to various issues,

including time schedules on both my part and the part of the Forest Service managers, and ultimately the time limit of completing the project. Of the 28 completed interviews, 14 were female and 14 male. This equal gender split was maintained as much as possible for every level of management that was interviewed.

All but two participants were assigned to Region 1 of the Forest Service at the time of their interview. Of the two that were not, both had been at one time. One was actively in the process of moving back into the region, and the other was assigned to Region 4, but worked for both Regions 1 and 4. Every interviewee had sometime previously been located in another region, including states such as California, Florida, Maine, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Washington. Because of these previous assignments, many of the related stories came from experiences outside of Region 1. While this study does not in any way attempt to represent more than Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service, it serves to note that the other regions of the U.S. Forest Service are at times indirectly represented through some of the narratives shared. Thus, it may be possible to reflect the findings herein upon each of the other regions to at least a small degree.

## **Structure and Flow of the Interviews**

### **Introductions**

Every interview began with a brief explanation of what the purpose of this research project was and how I came to decide to study women and leadership in a large organization. Specifically, I explained that I was currently working on



my master's thesis in organizational communication, and that I had received my undergraduate degree in interpersonal and organizational communication from a university on the East Coast. I also informed them of my six years of experience in a large computer corporation, and then told them about my five years of military experience.

I found it important that I told them my information in that order, intentionally highlighting my military experience and glossing over my corporate experience. It seemed that because of my military experience, interviewees were more willing to talk to me as a peer who would understand their organization more readily, based most likely on the fact that the U.S. Forest Service was designed to reflect a military structure. Their seeming connection with me through my military experience is supported by frequent interviewee references to the comparisons and similarities between the Forest Service and the military. For example, one leader stated that "the Forest Service traditionally had a pretty structured set of chairs that you had to go through, probably similar to the military experience that you're familiar with." When talking about the Forest Service's chain of command, the same interviewee noted that the Forest Service is not like the military where lower ranked individuals are not supposed to speak with those of higher ranks.

Another interviewee, upon discussing women entering the Forest Service, said, "I suppose that that's the way it was in other organizations. Well I'll bet the military wasn't that much different when they first started to bring women in. I don't know how they are now." This same individual also referred to the military

in terms of the design from which the Forest Service was modeled. He explained, "We're kind of a militarialistic organization."

I do feel that the fact that my participants knew I was in the military impacted some small pieces of our conversations, as evidenced by the above statements. However, I believe that the impact was positive, enabling me to seem more like a peer to the Forest Service members, thus encouraging them to be more comfortable and open with me.

### **Ethics Statement**

All interviews were audio recorded, and began with an ethics statement assuring each interviewee of confidentiality and anonymity. A copy of the ethics statement can be found at the top of the interview schedule in Appendix E.

Every interviewee responded with an audible affirmation that they understood that the interview was recorded, anonymous, confidential, and voluntary.

To maintain the confidential element of those interviews, all names and supervisory positions related to the stories depicted herein have been withheld. Additionally, any identifying information has been removed from stories or modified within brackets in order to maintain the structure of each narrative being analyzed. Therefore, throughout the reporting of the findings this study presents, participants are referred to in a general sense by a number of titles, including interviewee, supervisor, leader, manager, forester, and member. None of these titles is meant to imply a particular organizational or leadership positions. Anonymity was promised to all participants, and such general labeling is meant to protect the privacy of the interviewees.

### **The Questions**

The interview questions were divided into three distinct sections. The first section inquired about the interviewee's occupation, asking questions about the progress they had made within the U.S. Forest Service to get to their current position. This section included questions such as, "Can you give me just a time line of where you've worked since you've been with the forest service, how long you were at each place, and what you did there?" and "Were there any barriers or problems along the way, getting to where you wanted to go?" This section also included discussion about the impact of working for the Forest Service on the employee's family.

The second section of questions was intended to gather information concerning how the participant engaged in and viewed their interaction with their peers, subordinates, and supervisors. During the first few interviews, I began this segment of questioning through the use of a Network Analysis Worksheet, a copy of which can be found in appendix F. This form was meant to assist the participant in visualizing the people he or she interacted with on a weekly basis. As I became more comfortable with the questions, this network analysis evolved into simply asking each participant to take a quiet moment and think about the people they worked with on a week to week basis. I asked them to visualize the people that they talked to frequently and consistently, including email and telephone contacts. This became an easier process to employ because it was faster, and it did not distract the interviewee from the topic of discussing those interactions they engaged in frequently.

This moment of thinking back was immediately followed by questions about those people they had pictured. Questions included, "Out of all of those people, tell me about one with whom you have an especially good working relationship," and "Can you tell me about a significant time (or the last time) that you interacted with this person?"

The third and final section of the interview was focused more directly on the organization, especially in terms of leadership and gender. The questions in this section included, "What is your philosophy of leadership?"; "What is it like to be a woman (or to work with women) in this organization?"; "What kinds of changes have you seen in the USFS over the time you have been with them?"; and "What are the key challenges as the U.S. Forest Service moves into the future?"

### **Generating Narratives**

It was found that asking an interviewee for a story outright, without probing, was not an effective means of generating narratives. Rather, a context was required. Therefore, in order to generate narratives from these questions, they were usually followed up with probes or direct requests for examples. I expressed this request a number of ways, including but not limited to the following:

- Can you tell me about the last time you did that?
- Tell me about a significant time (or the last time) you interacted with that person.
- Have there been times when that was done differently?
- What happened, from your point of view?
- Can you tell me about one of those times?

- Can you give me a specific example?

Follow-up probes to support and encourage the storytelling included:

- And then what happened?
- What did you do next?
- Did they respond?
- Why did this happen?
- Why does this particular incident stand out in your memory?

When I first began conducting the interviews, they were often stilted and just didn't seem to flow very well. However, over time I became more adept at asking questions. Eventually, the interview was almost script-like. Each question was asked almost verbatim in each interview once I found the text that the participants seemed to understand best. Some questions flowed in particular ways that seemed crucial to the flow of the interview. For example, in asking what the key challenges had been for the Forest Service in the past, and what they would be in the future, it was important to ask these as two separate questions that moved forward in time. Hence, the interviewee was first asked, "What kinds of changes have you seen in the USFS over the time you have been with them?" After general probes such as "Can you give me a specific example of the last time this was an issue?", the next question would usually be phrased to move the participant forward in time: "What are the key challenges as the U.S. Forest Service moves into the future?" Again, the question would be followed by probes designed to generate narratives.

As the interviews continued and became more standardized, I found myself phrasing some statements using the Forest Service's own terminology.

For example, in asking for a timeline of the successive positions she had held, I asked one forester, "Can you list for me the chairs that you moved through to get to this position?" Similarly, I noticed that interviewees often used their own colloquial terms and phrases, only occasionally realizing that they might need to clarify their words for me. Most of the time, the meaning was clear, but it was interesting to hear their terminology flow freely. It seemed to me that this was a sign that they were comfortable sharing their stories and thoughts with me, possibly harkening back to their identification with my prior military experience.

Even as the phrasing of questions became more standardized, and I became more comfortable with the process, there were still a few interviews that did not flow well. Sometimes, an interviewee would not roll into a story or specific example. In these cases, even when asked for a specific story or time when something happened, the participant would remain general in their terminology, talking about how something "would always" happen a certain way.

These difficulties reflect differences in male and female styles of talking. Wood (1999) explains that men's talk is more focused on bare information while "a woman is more likely to embed the information within a larger context of the people involved and other things going on" (p.131). Women may, thus, recount their stories with more attention to detail, often resulting in a greater sense of involvement and inclusion. It is typical of women's conversation to include details, personal disclosures, and anecdotes (Campbell, 1989; Wood, 1999).

Hence, it is not surprising that some of the men I conducted interviews with were less inclined to recount a detailed story. Conversely, and also not

surprising, I found a few women who seemed to tell one large story that progressed from the beginning of the interview all the way to the end.

As an adjustment for these differences in male and female storytelling behaviors, not all interviews were transcribed and included in this study. Rather, I focused on male and female interviews that provided definable stories that could be easily identified and isolated.

## CHAPTER 3

### DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

In the last chapter, I focused on the methods and procedures for collecting the data for this study. In this chapter, I discuss the process used to analyze the data. First, I review the criteria with which narratives were delineated. Next, I present the characters that were found within the narratives. This is followed by a discussion of the study limitations. Finally, I present the three-tier process through which the narratives were analyzed.

#### Review of Narrative Criteria

In the literature review, I discussed Brown's (1990) criteria for narratives, against which I planned to discern what parts of the interview transcripts could be characterized as organizational stories. Narratives are thus made up of the following attributes:

- A sense of temporality
- Three elements of a story: Preface, Recounting Sequence, Closing Sequence
- A ring of truth to the membership
- Relevance to the membership
- An association with the organization

These elements form the conceptual framework, or script, around which the story is built (Martin, 1982). They were very effective for this study in discerning narratives from standard conversation. After the first four or five interviews, I began to more easily sense when the participant was moving into a story. I found especially that the three elements that make up a story were the easiest for me to hear while in the midst of the interview.



Conversely, the sense of temporality was the most difficult to deal with. Some participants would forego a specific story, and tend rather to either tell me about “how things generally work” or philosophize about what they would “normally” do. One of the more prevalent versions of this generalized story was the type of sequence that I ultimately termed “That was then, this is now.” These were segments during which the interviewee discussed how life in the Forest Service used to be compared to how it currently is.

To negotiate these situations, I would often push one time to see if the participant would present a specific example of the experience they were discussing. If this was unsuccessful, I noted the reference and moved on. In the end, enough stories were collected so that the most generalized pieces could be dropped in favor of more specific ones. At the same time, these more vague segments often provided the quotes that I draw on herein to help interpret the more specific stories told by others.

The last criterion, that the narrative be associated with the organization in question, is one that I added for the purpose of this study. This element is essential to maintain the focus of the study on the employees’ involvement with the U.S. Forest Service. While delineating this point was important, it was not of issue during the interviews. The participants never stepped away from discussing their involvement with the Forest Service. I believe this was attributed in part to the interview schedule, which helped to keep discussions on track. Additionally, all interviews were conducted during work hours and usually on Forest Service property, so that the participants were essentially “at work” during

our discussion. Most certainly, this helped keep the narratives focused on U.S. Forest Service topics, issues, and concerns.

### The Characters

#### The Narrator

As explained earlier, the personal nature of the stories collected for this project resulted in the narrator's presence in nearly all of them. The roles that narrators played in their own stories varied considerably, as did the roles of the other story characters. Presented below is a table that summarized the characters played, followed by a brief description of some of the roles. A more detailed table can be found in appendix G.

**TABLE 3.1**  
**Narrative Characters**

<u>The Interviewee's Role</u>	<u>Other Characters</u>
Leadership Position	Subordinates
Mentor & Mentee	Counterparts
Subordinate	Superiors
Male or Female	The U.S. Forest Service
Part of the Organization	Offices
Job Function	Internals
Function in Relation to Subordinates	Family Members
Part of a family	The Public
	Externals

In the vast majority of personal narratives, the interviewee played the role of supervisor. This fits the fact that every participant was a supervisor in their current position, and most had been in that or a similar position for many years. It also supports the intent of this study to be specifically about the leadership point-of-view.

The next most frequent role that narrators took on in their own stories was that of a general employee in the Forest Service. Amidst these stories, many female narrators put themselves specifically in the position of a female employee.

Some examples of this narrative role are as follows:

- “For instance, a couple years ago, I went on a forestry review with 10 people, and I was the only female...”
- “That year, they had a real backlog of logging slash that they needed to take care of, so they hired three 10-person crews, and there were 6 women, and they put 2 of us women on each crew.”
- “And he was just working me around because I was a young woman”
- “I was the first female...”
- “I think for the most part, it’s a good agency to be a woman in.”

Conversely, very few male participants expressed a story that was from a gendered point of view. In one story, a male explained how he and a previous female peer would negotiate their interactions with external groups based, in part, on whether a particular group would relate better to a male or a female. In another case, a man told of a conference where he was the only male amongst a group of women going to dinner.

In relation to the Forest Service agency, participants most frequently played the role of general employee. However, they also often took on the role

of agency representative, or even took on the role of the agency as their own persona, as in the following examples:

- “We’ve gotta listen to the public, but we’ve got these other things that’s expected of us as an agency.”
- “We are a different organization compared to what we were 30 years ago.”
- “Biggest challenge for the agency as a whole is to figure out and be comfortable with the fact that we’re going to be swinging in the wind from one side of the spectrum to the other with the next administration.”

Conversely, there were just a few stories in which the participant identified himself or herself as separate from the agency. One forester seemed to be very aware of his choice of separating himself from the identity of the agency in a story that told of a time when it was clear that his needs were different from that of the organization. He explained:

But I had to stand true to my own values. At that point in time it was one of the hardest calls I had to make in terms of personal development, making a break from quote-unquote “where the agency wanted you to go” and where your personal needs were.

Other roles that were frequented by the narrators, including that of subordinate, mentee, crewmember, and trainee, stemmed from stories that harkened back to when the narrator had first entered the U.S. Forest Service. Narratives regarding the impact of the Forest Service on the participant’s family and personal life garnered identifications as part of the family unit. Hence, a number of stories drew narrator roles of parent, spouse, and friend.

### **Other Characters**

The majority of other characters found in the narratives were subordinates to the interviewee. For the most part, these subordinates were referred to as “the

staff,” but other titles, including team, workers, employees, and “the forest” were also used. When discussing the impact of the Forest Service on employees’ personal lives, subordinates were occasionally referred to as a member of their individual families. For instance, one leader spoke of a male subordinate as a “dad.”

Many stories also included references to the narrator’s peers, including other rangers, supervisors, team members, and staff. Superiors were usually referred to by general titles, such as boss or supervisor.

Regarding issues of gender, other characters in the narratives were occasionally referred to in terms of their experiences as men or women. This seemed to primarily occur when participants told stories that involved their peers. When discussing internal employees in general, some stories emerged about women, but very few about men. Superiors were rarely discussed in reference to gender issues.

Considering that I was specifically in search of experiences regarding women in the U.S. Forest Service, that more stories about women than about men emerged is not surprising. However, it is interesting that both men and women were discussed at the peer level, but for internals in general, mostly stories about women surfaced, and that so few gender stories appeared at all surrounding subordinate roles.

When discussing the U.S. Forest Service, terms such as the agency, the outfit, and “they” were common. Forest Service offices, including the Regional Office and especially the office in Washington, D.C. were also mentioned.

General references were made to people internal to the Forest Service agency, such as the fire network or community, engineering, and management.

Especially when discussing the impact of the Forest Service on members' personal lives and families, participants' family members took on roles in the stories. Spouses and children were the most common family characters, although aging parents and extended family occasionally made an appearance.

Finally, the local public external to the U.S. Forest Service played key roles in a number of narratives. Local communities who had a vested interest in the laws that the Forest Service was involved with included ranchers, cowboys, miners, independent foresters, snowmobilers, and adamant environmentalists.

### **Limitations**

#### **Use of Narratives**

First and foremost, the biggest limitation to this study was the plan to restrict "data" to only that information that emerges from narratives. This process eliminated key discussions and phrases that often better articulated the points that the stories underscored. Rather, it was important that narratives and interview texts were taken in concert. In this way, they could support each other so that what the interview text said distinctly, the story could then explain or demonstrate. In the present study, many participants enunciated themes, ideas, and issues apart from their narratives. I found it necessary to include these obvious elements, and found benefit from their information as I searched for the elusive amidst the narratives.

There are, of course, benefits to taking the narratives as separate from the rest of the interview text. The storyteller may have a particular point they are leading towards, but in the process, are alluding to other elements that they are not aware of. This is the benefit and task of the second and third levels of analysis in the present study.

### **Personal Stories**

Almost all of the narratives collected for this study are personal stories. By this I mean that the participant was an active participant in the story, and that the stories represented personal experiences rather than organizational myths or sagas.

This is due primarily to the nature of the investigation. All stories were collected in an interview atmosphere, and all questions inquired specifically about personal experiences. Questions such as "Have you ever had your authority challenged or threatened?", "What is your philosophy of leadership?", and "Can you describe for me a good working relationship that you have with another employee?" inherently lead to narratives that are personal in nature. There are a very few narratives in which the storyteller is not a character in the story.

I do not consider this a limitation, but rather an advantage. The stories are representative of participants' perceptions of their actual experiences in the Forest Service. This strengthens the attempts of this study to capture the interviewee's actual viewpoint of their organizational life.

### **Positioning of the Researcher**

As the interviewer, I was an "outsider" trying to look into an organization to which I did not belong. This is especially a limitation because I could only take what was told to me at face value. The number of interviews conducted, which generated a large number of narratives, countermanded this limitation. Theme repetition and emergence was usually obvious.

This limitation is also countered by my previous military experience. As I explained in the section that describes the data collection process, my interviews consistently began with an explanation of my own past work and schooling experiences, so the participant would know me better, and thus be more comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas, and stories with me. In amongst my resume is five years experience in the military. I always made a point of stating this because participants seemed to be able to relate to it. Perhaps because it is well known within the U.S. Forest Service that the agency was originally fashioned after the Prussian Military, and perhaps because there are elements within it that are often compared to the military, including the hierarchy, chain of command, and membership to the U.S. government, knowing that I was prior military seemed to help get past the sense that I was an "outsider".

Thus, while I was in a position to view the organization from an external and objective perspective, knowing about my military experience seemed to enable participants to be comfortable enough, for the most part, to share key stories with me.



### **Interview Setting**

There is strength in the limitations set by collecting data strictly by interview. While separated from the context of the normal workday, the interview environment creates a consistency in the purpose behind the telling of the story, and it specifies that the listener is the interviewer. Because the vast majority of stories told were personal in nature, the interviewee is almost always in the story, and so takes personal value in the story telling and their own position in that story.

Additionally, the interview setting restricted variability in the contexts of the stories. If these narratives are ever told in standard conversational environments, whatever additional messages such a setting may provide were lost in the isolated, one-on-one situation that was the consistent interview setting for this study.

Finally, the personal stories that follow such questioning are more likely to be poignant to the storyteller. The events that are recounted are meant by the narrator to be related directly to the subjects I am inquiring about. The first level analysis, where categories are maintained in the words of the participants also helps to present the participants' viewpoints, thus preserving the messages intended by interviewees.

### **Eliciting Narratives**

Overall, female participants provided more stories than the men that were interviewed did. Additionally, it seemed easier, for the most part, to elicit stories from women. They seemed more willing to go into detail and provide specific

examples. Conversely, men's stories were often general, providing explanations of how and why, rather than specific events that depicted an example or story.

There were definite exceptions to these statements, but the existence of these problems in eliciting stories limits this study by weakening the number of male stories in comparison to those elicited from women. To counter this limitation, I studied the transcripts more fully, attending to statements and explanations as well as stories, thus enabling greater inclusion of male participants. Still, the greatest focus is on the narratives, with statements and general conversation maintained as supportive information.

### **The Analysis Process**

I analyzed the collected narratives utilizing a three-tier process. The first level of analysis remains very close to the words of the participants, simply representing the ideas and themes that emerged throughout the interviews. Each succeeding level of analysis then stepped further away from the actual data, and closer to a more abstract level of analysis and interpretation.

### **First-Level Categories**

To begin the first level of data analysis, I generated categories to show topics that were discussed. This meant determining what was talked about the most across all interviews. Staying very close to participants' actual words, I searched the data to determine which topics the interviewees spent the most time on, which topics generated the most narratives, and which subjects the participants seemed most interested in. In generating those categories, I tried to find patterns of subjects and attitudes that were similar as well as themes that

were unique or different. To counteract the limitations that the use of narratives presents, I also went in search of statements that clearly enunciated the general viewpoint.

### **Second-Level Analysis**

The second level of analysis comes in two parts. In part A, I analyze the first-level categories through a framework of power and leadership. At this stage, gender remains an imbedded concept, underlying most points, even when not mentioned.

The part B of this analysis, I focus more directly on gender by drawing together the first-level categories and the literature review. Because of this, the second half of this stage of the analysis runs in a parallel progression to the literature review found in chapter two.

In this second-level analysis, I remained fairly close to the narratives and the words of my participants. In this way, the emergent themes still closely represent the perceptions of the participants. At the same time, the analysis of those narratives begins to be more analytical, especially as the literature review is interwoven.

### **Third-Level Analysis & Interpretation**

For the most part, this third level of analysis was gradually developed across the entire process of this study. This is the most abstract of all three levels of analysis, and the process of pulling this section together was the most ambiguous. Themes and ideas would rise out of other elements, so they would be listed under this section for later consideration. Repetition of story types

across a number of different interviews often indicated the prevalence of themes, and the importance of drawing them out. Many ideas emerged as epiphanies or out of crystallizing moments. As a theme proved it had “staying power,” I spent more time developing it. The fact that many of the resulting themes in this section build upon each other was, in the end, something of a surprise.

It is at this third level that the most critical-interpretive stance is taken. This is useful to move the analysis past simple observation and into a place where we can see better what is going on inside the organization, and get a clearer sense of the underlying power relations (Cheney, in press). This level of the analysis is meant to be pragmatic in nature, stepping the furthest away from the narratives and into their aggregate significance. By pragmatic, I mean that the actual or potential impact of the narrative is taken into consideration. Attention is thus paid to the meaning behind stories.

Narratives viewed from a gender standpoint, and with a critical stance, may allude to sources of power otherwise missed. To interpret is useful, as it provides a more objective viewpoint into the meaning of the narratives. But, in this case, it is not enough. Rather, it is matched with a critical analysis, allowing a more provocative judgement of the meaning behind the narratives. It is through this that power structures and a sense of what's going on inside the organization can be better discerned, extracted, and labeled.

### **Summary**

The three-tier process of analyzing the collected narratives was designed to initiate close to the participants' stories, and then gradually step away into a

more critical-interpretive analysis. Through this process, underlying elements of gender, leadership, and power are drawn out, depicting the participants' perceptions of their organization. In the next chapter, the data are analyzed, and the results are presented.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATIONS

In the previous chapter, I presented the processes with which the collected data was analyzed. In this chapter, the analysis of the data is presented. It begins with the first-level category analysis, which stays close to the narratives, and so is very descriptive in nature. The second level of analysis then follows in two parts, first focusing on leadership and power, and then centering on gender. Finally, the third level of analysis is presented. As the most abstract level, it moves towards more general interpretations and conclusions about gender, leadership, and power.

#### First-Level Categories

In deriving the first level of categories, there was little or no attention paid to theoretical constructs or frameworks. Rather, this level of categories was focused on the interviewees' actual words in an attempt to capture the topics and issues that were most prevalent in the work-lives of the participants at the time of the interview. Thus, the first level of categories is very descriptive in nature, consisting of themes and issues that Forest Service professionals referred to frequently during the course of their interviews.

The categories are divided into two sections: solicited and unsolicited. Solicited categories emerged because the interviewees were asked about these topics directly. Included in this grouping are "Leadership Philosophies," "Positions and Promotions," and "Barriers and Conflict." Within each of the solicited categories emerged a variety of interesting themes and issues.

Unsolicited categories, including “The Changing Agency,” “Key Policies and their Impact,” and “Events Surrounding Gender,” emerged throughout the interviews.

An example that fits both solicited and unsolicited categories and shows how they connect can be found within the topic of “Conflicts and Barriers.” A few foresters discussed how the U.S. Forest Service previously encouraged competition between the different districts on a forest. Now the agency supports a more cooperative or collaborative spirit. The narratives collected for this topic were in response to the solicited category that requested stories that depicted conflict situations or barriers the member was forced to negotiate. However, these particular stories also connected strongly to the unsolicited category that depicts the U.S. Forest Service as an agency that is, and has been, undergoing change. Both the solicited and unsolicited categories will be addressed briefly in the second half of this section. Those segments that have stronger relationships to gender, leadership, and power will be discussed in greater detail.

**TABLE 4.1****First-Level Categories**

<b><u>SOLICITED</u></b>	<b><u>UNSOLICITED</u></b>
Leadership strategies and viewpoints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accidental leadership</li> <li>• Philosophies of leadership</li> <li>• Mentors</li> </ul>	(De)Centralized Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders feeling undermined</li> <li>• Bucking / Fighting the system</li> <li>• Control issues</li> <li>• The structure described</li> </ul>
Barriers and Conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding you back</li> <li>• Facing opposition</li> <li>• Bucking or challenging authority</li> <li>• External and internal</li> <li>• Competition vs. Cooperation</li> </ul>	The Changing Agency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics</li> <li>• Changes up to now</li> <li>• Changes into the future (Key challenges)</li> </ul>
Positions and Promotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional positions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Was generalized; now specialized</li> <li>○ Supervise or specialize</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Promotion               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expectations</li> <li>○ Agency driven</li> <li>○ Negative aspects</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Moving</li> </ul>	Key Policies and Their Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent decree</li> <li>• Co-Op</li> <li>• Roadless</li> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Mining</li> <li>• Nepotism</li> <li>• "Babes in the Woods"</li> </ul>
Impact on the Family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiating Forest Service impact</li> <li>• Strategies and negotiations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Child care</li> <li>○ Spousal support</li> <li>○ Dual career</li> <li>○ Nepotism (policy)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Telling the boss you're pregnant</li> </ul>	Events Surrounding Gender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies</li> <li>• Women entering the Forest Service</li> <li>• Negotiating gender &amp; power</li> <li>• Perception of women &amp; leadership</li> </ul>
	Relationships and Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Externally and Internally</li> <li>• Communication difficulties</li> </ul>

**Solicited Categories**

This category is comprised of stories that depict leadership experiences and styles. For the most part, if gender was elemental in the leadership story, it was placed in the "gender" category. These, therefore, are stories that discuss leadership in the U.S. Forest Service when gender is not a focus.



## **Leadership Strategies**

A good portion of this category is made up of the answers to the interview questions “What is your philosophy of leadership” and the follow-up question “Can you articulate five principles that best encapsulate your leadership philosophies?” The latter question was usually only asked if the participant had difficulties articulating his or her answer to the first question.

The resultant list of leadership philosophies can be easily grouped under the following themes:

### **Leadership Philosophies**

- Honesty
- Openness
- Fairness
- Respect
- Encourage cooperation / Collaboration
- Encourage growth / Mentoring

Additionally, participants discussed the processes through which they managed their team, delegated responsibilities, and made decisions. These responses can be further categorized into leadership styles, based on key statements such as “I support them in their decisions,” “I try to empower them,” “Give them the training and tools they need to do their job,” and “I don’t like to be micromanaged, so I don’t micromanage.”

All participants referred to their leadership styles in ways that indicated a more participative style of leadership. Additionally, approximately 25% of the interviewees noted that their participative style is more flexible, allowing them to

adjust their approach as the situation varies. Two of those explanations are as follows:

Example 1:

In order to be successful, the worst thing you could do is to not take action, and not make the decision. So there has to be a willingness on the part of the person who's the leader to make the decision, to make the call. Make the tough call. Don't kiss it off to somebody else or go lay it on somebody else's shoulders. You've got to make the tough call.

Example 2:

Personally for me there's a real fine line there. We've gotta listen to the public, but we've got these other things that's expected of us as an agency. And it's a tough decision to make, but you've got to achieve a balance, where some leaders, the path of least resistance is to jump to where the public is.

For these leaders, participation seems to still be important, but there is also a perceived need to maintain their own authority over particular situations. Some leaders who discussed these tactics themselves referred to it as "situational leadership."

This is indicative of the one element that seems to vary within the prevalent participative leadership style. There is a distinct variance in accordance with where the ultimate authority lies. In some cases, the power to make decisions and the authority to stand behind them is given to the employee and while the supervisor provides support, they do not view the authority as something that should be taken back once it is given. For them, once authority is delegated, it belongs with the subordinate.

Conversely, some leaders seemed to perceive authority as something that can or should be delegated, but is also retractable. By "retractable," I mean the supervising party would turn authority over to the subordinate, but then might

retrieve or take it back if they deemed it necessary to override the decision being made.

### **Barriers and Conflict**

For the purpose of this category, "Barriers & Conflicts" are loosely described as situations, circumstances and events that prevented an individual or group from completing a task or making progress towards a goal. Elements that were presented as barriers included the lack of necessary education, having to make unpopular decisions, enduring internal competition for funds, dealing with insubordination, and negotiating disagreements between the public, the agency, and the law. An example of this last situation came in the form of a story about a small town that was completely surrounded by National Forest land. The forester explained in detail how she spent time forging relationships with the local community and within her own district in order to even begin negotiating through the negative and distrustful atmosphere that had developed there over many years.

Dealing with the potential barrier of internal competition, which could prevent a district from obtaining needed funding, was depicted through a number of different narratives. One story was summarized as follows:

I was in competition with my fellow rangers on the forest. There were six of us, and if I could outfox them and get more money, get more budget, more power to me. It didn't matter whether or not they had important work to get done, I got more money. I was coming back to the district with a bigger budget. And the more money I'd get, the more my folks liked it and the more I was valued by the Forest Supervisor. And we created that competition, sometimes to the detriment of the public. Because maybe the highest priority should have been on the adjacent district. Maybe that's really, if we've got a limited amount of money, maybe they

need it worse than we do. I got it. And now we work together better.

This narrative example works especially well here because it shows a forester's personal awareness of the power he yielded both through position and access to resources, such as funding.

### **Positions & Promotions**

The category entitled "Positions and Promotions" came about primarily because every interviewee was asked about the timeline of their progression within the U.S. Forest Service from the time they entered the agency up until their present position. From this topic, two key themes emerged: Unwritten rules, and changes within the organization.

By "unwritten rules," I mean that the participants indicated expectations of their own or other's behaviors that were not delineated by the agency's written guidelines. One unwritten rule was the expectation that individuals desiring to progress in the hierarchy will move geographically to do so. There seemed to be a basic understanding by all interviewees that such a move was simply "the way things work" in the agency. One leader who had not made the expected moves indicated that others referred to her as having not paid her dues, and that while she concurred, it was a personal decision that she did not regret.

There was indication that the organization is changing in such a way that unwritten rules such as "moving to progress" are gradually decreasing in intensity. The expected order of progression seems to also be in a minor state of flux. At least four people talked about skipping steps in their advancement within the agency, but referred to it as unusual and rare.

### **Impact on the Family**

Almost all interviews included questions about how employment with the U.S. Forest Service impacted the participant's family life. All respondents were willing to explain in detail how their employment has affected personal and family decisions.

One of the biggest Forest Service issues that impacts the family is the expectation that higher level professionals will move every time they take a new position. This is especially an issue when families have children that are of high school age. Consistently, interviewees noted the high school years as a time when they would not be moving.

### **Unsolicited Categories**

#### **(De)Centralized Organization**

This category is a collection of stories that address the agency's internal power struggles between being a centralized and decentralized organization. An example to bring this category into perspective can be found in the Roadless initiative, which was a very public issue during the interview phase of this research. One forester told a long story about how the details for disseminating the information about the Roadless initiative into the local community were decided by the Chief of the Forest Service. The directions were very specific, and she explained in detail how the process was destructive for her local community. As she completed her story, the forester explained, "I spoke out against that, but we had no choice. We were told 'PowerPoint, testimony, court reporter.' I would never have done that, but... that wasn't within my discretion."

This category also includes stories where the participant describes the organizational structure of the U.S. Forest Service. This is important because it shows a distinct hierarchy within the organization, reverence to those positions, and the power that each position holds. The power of the hierarchy is especially evident in one forester's story about how almost all of the regional foresters, the highest level 'local' positions, were replaced the last time the Presidential Administration changed from Republican to Democratic. The point of this story is twofold: (1) the agency is very politicized, and (2) no matter how high in rank and authority you are, there is someone above you with more control.

### **The Changing Agency**

There was a plethora of stories that reflected how the U.S. Forest Service has changed over the last 20-30 years. The elements described as changing include the following:

- Leadership strategies
  - Less authoritative, more participative
  - Less technical, more people-oriented
- Employee age
  - Large percentage nearing retirement
  - Very few under the age of 30
- Diversity
  - Gender: more women
  - Job diversification: general v. specialized
- Competition replaced by collaboration
- Agency more political
- Influx of technology
  - Intra-agency communication impacted
  - Communication with public impacted

In reference to gender, the key narrative that falls into this category is the "Where are all the foresters?" story offered at the beginning of this paper. Along the course of the story, the male civilian expresses surprise at the lack of males in the supervisor's office, and ultimately says to the female Forest Supervisor, "Nothin' but girls. Nothin' but girls! Where are all the foresters?" Even after 30 years of active female integration into the hierarchy, there remains work to be done.

Internally, surprise at the prevalence of female leadership is not so common. A male forester told a story through which he noted the large percentage of women. He explained that it "says a lot about how the organization, from a diversity standpoint, has changed. In the past.... 20 years ago, that would have been all men. There's absolutely no doubt about that."

This does not mean, however, that the diversity issue has been settled for this organization. The story "Where are all the foresters?" was a recollection of events that occurred within the last two years. The storyteller and the other female listener raised their eyebrows in amazement, but not surprise. There were a number of other stories that depicted how some women still find themselves isolated in meetings, where they are the only woman amongst a group of men. Most women had a gender story both from when they first entered the agency, and from less than 10 years ago.

Some stories depict a change within the organization concerning internal competition. As much as 20 years ago, regions were in competition with each other for money, through which they would gain more favor in the eyes of their

supervisor. A piece of one of these narratives can be found under “Barriers & Conflicts” above. Another narrator described a similar situation:

The style of management was to pit the rangers against each other in a competitive way. You know, the forest supervisor would say, “Oh, I’ll give this money to the ranger that has the best proposal,” and so we kind of just hated each other because it was, “By God, that ranger got that and I didn’t and I want it.”

These stories demonstrate the organization’s ability to create competition amongst the ranks of foresters. They also provide insight into how the incited rivalry was perceived by those involved. There now seems to be a preference for collaboration rather than competition, and a sense of relief that the competition is no longer the standard mode of operation.

### **Key Policies and Their Impact**

Many of the narratives included references to a number of key organizational and federal policies. Those that were on-going at the time of the interviews, such as the Roadless initiative and Recreation, are explained in the current events portion of this study.

The Consent Decree, a federal policy enacted in California in the 1970’s, is cited as instrumental in accelerating the advancement of women in Forest Service positions (Brown & Harris, 1993; Mohai & Jakes, 1996; O’Carroll, Freemuth, & Alm, 1996; Brown & Harris, 1993). This decree was referred to by a number of male and female interviewees as they discussed female progression in the U.S. Forest Service. The decree was both praised as a success in helping women access the organization, and also decried as a generator of anger and frustration. One forester explained:



There was a lot of anger in the region, both from women and men, over the consent decree. A lot of women didn't like it because they felt like people viewed them when they came in the job as the only reason they got the job was because of the consent decree. And they thought that they were very capable of their job. So they felt like people were categorizing them as not being capable, that they got the job 'cause they were women. And there were guys that believed that there was no chance of them for ever getting that job or a promotion because their all going to go to the women. So there was all this anger and frustration that was going on there. But there were some really positive things too.

Other policies that were referenced in quite a few narratives were maternity leave policies and "Babes in the Woods," which allows parents to bring their infants into the workplace. One storyteller discussed the impact of this last policy, which enabled the father of a newborn to bring his child in. This was depicted as unusual because it is normally the mother who arranges to bring the child into her workplace.

### Gender

When a story centered on the topic of gender, themes included the following:

- Leadership strategies
- Negotiating the level of power they had because of their gender
- Experiences from when women first entered the Forest Service
- More recent experiences of tokenism or harassment
- Perceptions of leadership differences and similarities according to gender

Some female participants recalled times when they sought protection from their male peers:

I remember the first couple times I went to fire camp, I was petrified. Because it is a very scary situation to be a woman and you're surrounded by guys, and so I would just stick with the guys on my crew, and I would not go anywhere without 'em. I just kinda

glued myself to one of them and I would always, "Will you walk me to the showers" and stuff. I remember, in California we used to work with Con crews, and that was really scary because they weren't around women except when they would get out, and it was just like "ooooooooohhh." I mean, not that they were guarded, not that they would do anything, but it was creepy.

Stories such as this one were always from an individual's early years in the agency. In particular, the one above demonstrates a strategy to counter gender isolation. Such narratives reflect power and gender negotiations. A woman's new position within the organization, placed alone amongst so many men, potentially limits her power and ability to negotiate her status.

Such stories of tokenism were prevalent and indicated strategies to negotiate isolation. Women who were isolated amongst many men often sought alliances and protection from their male peers. Stories about women who were less isolated included themes of battling harassment directly, improving a situation because of the gender mix, or simply referring to gender as a non-issue.

Narratives indicate the possibility that strategies engaged to prevent the isolation of a woman do not necessarily require the presence of other women. Rather, if the males involved in the situation are supportive, they may act in such a way that they provide enough encouragement and fellowship to prevent a sense of isolation.

Another woman described the protection she received from her manager when a peer was attempting to sabotage her. In this case, she was asked by her manager to endure the covert behavior while the manager documented the events until enough information had been gathered for the agency to be able to take appropriate action.

Conversely, women who find themselves in un-supportive environments seem to suffer because of it. One woman told a narrative that portrayed such a situation:

A project would come up and I would just get overlooked. And I thought, "That just doesn't make sense." So I went in and confronted the person and they said, "Well, I didn't think of you." And I thought, "Well, that's real telling," 'cause... I was the only one on the staff. The reception I got was "God... you're paranoid." And... it made confronting that person something I would never do again, 'cause they tried to turn it around like I had the problem, and maybe I did, but they were not willing to take any ownership at all.

The impact of such an experience can vary. For the woman who told the narrative above, being purposefully disregarded impacted how she interacted with her manager. Eventually, she left that position for another with a boss that was more of a mentor. Another female manager who described similar experiences later found herself in a number of different positions where she could train external male groups about fair and equal gender treatment. Each of these results shows the possible ways women might manage such a situation.

Another theme focuses on female responses to direct and indirect harassment and prejudice. A female manager explained how she has handled the barriers she faced whenever she was promoted:

Whenever I've taken a new job, there's always that initial time period when people kinda look at you like, "Are you a quota, or are you really qualified?" And that's been frustrating and tedious... I think, sometimes going to some of those initial meetings when you just meet the group and people size each other up, there's almost that undercurrent of "I wonder why she's here," and I don't know if that's... I'm overly sensitive to it, but I've felt that enough that I think there's always that question of "Is she here because she's meeting affirmative action, or if she's really qualified?" And I think I get through that hurdle fairly quickly, but there's always that initial icebreaker.

While this story tells more of a general perspective of a woman's experiences rather than a particular event, it provides a sense of her personal response to the animosity she has faced. Thus, even if nothing is ever said to a woman, she may still endure emotional or psychological stress from the attitudes that exist below the surface of conversation.

The majority of gender narratives are stories about initial experiences when women first entered the Forest Service. They were told by both men and women, and include both positive and negative perspectives of those experiences. An example of a story from when a woman first entered the Forest Service is as follows:

Well, when I started, I started in fire. And fire, I think, was the last of the Forest Service to really truly integrate and diversify. I think partly because of the kind of work it is, and the kind of people that enjoy that kind of work.... But I can remember my very first day on the job, meeting with the crew-members. And I didn't know any of them before. They'd all worked together the summer before, so I'm the new kid on the block. I'm the first female on the crew, and I just remember one guy taking me aside and saying "Look, I'm not gonna change what I say, I'm not gonna change how I dress, I'm not gonna change this, I'm not gonna change that, just 'cause you're here". And I said, "Fine, neither am I" and after that we were great friends and everything worked really well. But they were really worried about having to change how they behaved because I was on the crew.

It should be noted that every interviewee had been in the agency for more than 20 years. Hence, all of the stories told about when they first entered the Forest Service are at least 20 years old. It makes sense, then, that many of these stories often also fall into the category of "The Changing Agency."

Most storytellers make a point of clarifying that their story represents a time that is past. One forester summed his story by explaining that “back then, (women) wouldn’t have been accepted then. But now I think that the people that come in aren’t thinking that way at all. And that’s better. A lot better.” Another explained that the atmosphere is “...better now than 20 years ago. 20 years ago, at least when I first started, there was much attempt to make you not successful.”

A number of narratives and the statements that surround them note that the organization, as a whole, has become more participative and less autocratic over the last 20 years. The influx of women during that same time is believed, at least in part, to have influenced that change. As one forester explained:

We’ve changed a lot in our organization. We’re not sort of a controlling and direct kind of an organization. But we’re a lot more interactive and a lot more people-oriented in trying to get our work done... I’ve watched that transition take place along with the same transition of women coming into our organization. I don’t know if that’s, we are a different organization compared to what we were 30 years ago. In order to be a supervisor... you had to be one of those ass-kickin’, chewin’ kinds of leaders... and you weren’t going to be successful if you didn’t. If you’re that kind of person now, you won’t ever get a crack at a forest supervisor job or a ranger job or something. It’ll never happen. Now, whether that’s caused because of social changes or that’s caused because of women coming into the organization, I don’t know. But it’s kind of following along the same time period.

Finally, this category includes stories that express perceptions of leadership differences and similarities according to gender. Some of these narratives discuss how women “used to be” more aggressive than they are now. Others describe women as more “inclusive” than men in their leadership styles. As with the other types of stories in this category, a large number of the

narratives depict a belief that leadership styles are different now than they were 20 years ago.

A few participants told of ways in which they had found profit from working closely with people of the opposite gender. For example, one supervisor explained that her gender has been a “benefit because when you’re working with an irate contractor, the way they react to another man is a lot different than they would react to a woman. So I have personally found it to be a benefit.”

Another forester told a story of how he and a female counterpart used their different genders to advantage in some situations, improving their effectiveness by sending the individual who would receive the best response. He explained that they were “able to be twice as effective in dealing with the public, partly based upon gender, and partly based upon our different personalities.” These narratives show that in the time that U.S. Forest Service personnel have learned to adjust to working in a gender-integrated environment, they have found some distinct ways to use the situation to their advantage.

### **Relationships and Communication**

Stories were placed within this category when the narrator focused on relationships and communication as elemental to the workings of the situation being conveyed. An example of such a focus is as follows:

And so I got in there and just started rebuilding a lot of those relationships and explaining to the people, and to everybody that wanted things for the national forest why everybody couldn’t have everything. And working with the district folks and explaining why some of those uses were acceptable, they were ok, and that we needed to collaborate and work together to figure out the best things.

From this explanation, it is clear that the narrator perceived the relationships between the community, the local Forest Service members, and herself as key to working through the issues at hand. Other themes that fell into this category included stories about mentoring, and leadership situations. For example, one female leader expounded on how proud she was of the communication and relationships within her leadership team:

Our lead team is fantastic... 'cause they're a team. They act as a team, they behave as a team. The rangers are no longer fighting for their sandbox. If there's a missing ranger and we're having a discussion about how money is allocated, they'll say, "You know, if Chuck were here, here's what he'd be saying – so we need to keep that in the mix." It's great.

This statement shows how much the manager values the relationships that have been fostered within her team. Rather than having to negotiate meetings, fairness, and representation, she can count on them watching out for each other.

### **Conclusions for First-Level Categories**

The categories described above constitute the most prevalent topics and issues derived from the interviews in such a way that the classification and interpretation remains faithful to the words of the interviewee. Through this, an understanding of the interviewee's own perception of their work environment becomes clear. Up until this moment, no theoretical or conceptual framework has been imposed by the researcher, except in clustering issues that go together in ways commonsensical to participants.

The next section presents the second level of analysis, where a focus on leadership, power, and then gender, is more pronounced. The analysis remains

fairly close to the narratives and the words of the participants, but begins to step away into a more abstract viewpoint as conceptual and theoretical frameworks are imposed to bring forth emergent themes and issues.

### **Second-Level Analysis**

In this second level of analysis, I begin to focus on central concerns of gender, leadership, and power, bringing to bear some concepts from relevant literature as a means of featuring important themes and allowing less pertinent ones to fall away. Through this, I hone the focus further, in preparation for the third level, where key themes will be explored from an even more abstract or general viewpoint.

This section still focuses on topics from the first-level categories, revealing values, issues, themes, and tensions. The analysis still stands fairly close to the narratives, but the viewpoint is more analytical, enlisting literature, comparing the stories, and looking at them in aggregate. Through this, we look at the stories and discussions from a more abstract point of view. It is at this level that gender, leadership, and power are drawn out, still in the words of the participants, but now analyzed through the eyes of an outsider.

This section begins with an explanation of the underlying theme of change that is key to most topics that emerge. Next, "leadership" and "power" are analyzed, with gender temporarily remaining infused. Elements from the first level categories that seem most significant are expounded upon, drawing forth key themes as the analysis builds towards the third-level interpretation. As it is the foremost element that I am studying, gender is found throughout both the



leadership and power elements that were revealed during the interviews. Hence it is initially embedded within these other categories rather than pulled out as its own. Finally, in order to extract gender more fully before moving into the third level of the analysis, some of the first-level categories are interwoven with the literature review.

### **Overriding Theme: Change**

At this juncture, it is necessary to draw attention to an overriding point of orientation within this study. Throughout all interviews, there was a distinct awareness of change over a specific span of time. Across nearly all interviews, there was an underlying theme projecting the idea that the U.S. Forest Service is changing, and that it has been in flux for at least the 20-plus years that all interviewees have been members of the agency. A large percentage of the stories conveyed this sense of change, showing that shifts are occurring across a variety of aspects within this organization. These stories often explored the difference between times past and the current situation, presenting a sense of “that was then, this is now.”

One forester explained that a lot of the changes have revolved around the separation of work and family, and employees no longer simply doing what the agency asked of them. Another interviewee simply stated, “...we are a different organization compared to what we were 30 years ago...”

An interviewee compared some organizational changes to the timeframe during which women came into the workplace. She proposed that it may be societal changes, “the perspective [of] bringing women to the workplace, or

having men with wives that have careers in the workplace” as a reason why such changes have occurred. Statements such as these indicate a perception that changes within the Forest Service are directly associated with the gradual progression of women in the agency’s workforce, as well as basic societal change that the organization is simply reflecting. Other foresters’ statements mirrored this perception as follows:

Example 1:

Now... whether that’s caused because of social changes or that’s caused because of women coming into the organization, I don’t know. But it’s kind of following along the same time period.

Example 2:

I just think society itself has been through so many changes in the last 15 or 20 years, that’s been a big part of it. More than anything the agency has done.

Changes in such things as organizational and individual expectations, policies, and leadership will be explored more fully throughout this and later sections. While these changes are a reflection of societal shifts, or influenced by women entering the agency, there is full agreement amongst participants that the last 20-30 years have been a time of flux, and that the organization continues to change.

### Second-Level Analysis, Part A: Power and Leadership

#### What Diversity Means

To a forester, “diversity” is not solely about gender. There is, of course, concern for gender and race, but occupational focus also comes into play for a manager in the U.S. Forest Service. Where once the training that a forester went through was general, hitting a variety of subjects that every forester should be

educated in, there is now very different types of training, depending on what a forester wants to focus on. As one participant explained:

The other significant change is...the diversification... not only from gender... but also from the mix of science, the mix of types of people we have, the professions. When I first started out, we didn't have hydrologists or geologists, or wildlife biologists, per se. When I went to college, I had courses in all of that stuff, and I was expected to be willing to generalize...

First and foremost, many participants noted that the agency's diversity in terms of gender has improved over the last 20 years. This change is especially attributed to the Consent Decree that was brought down by the court systems in California in the 1970s.

Despite this, there is still a perception that there is room for further improvement. Women shared stories of various situations where they were the sole female amongst a group of men in a meeting or gathering. Conversely, only one man shared a story where he was alone in a gathering amongst many women. In this male's narrative, the event is projected as an example of how things have changed into a situation of greater diversity. However, that is only one story of the male perspective to compare against many from the female point of view. Today, women continue to find themselves alone amidst other male leaders, indicating still more work this organization's diversity may benefit from.

In addition to gender, many foresters also noted the challenge that the Forest Service is up against, with the organization's movement towards occupational specialization. One detailed well his perception of the movement towards this new diversity:

One time, we were all struck from the same mold. Used to be all engineers and all foresters. This goes back more than 30 years ago. We all came out of the same schools, whether East or West Coast school. A forestry school was a forestry school, and they taught the same stuff, same style.

We could sit around a table with five or six foresters with a couple engineers sprinkled in the middle of that, all males, all of us came out of usually rural settings. Not always, but it gyrated that way. And have a decision to make and everybody kind of sits around and goes "Yup, that's the right decision". Now that's pretty easy. It's all about the same values, learning the same stuff, think about things the same way, in a general sense. And that's not true anymore. It got a lot more complicated. And gender is part of it, but the disciplines are a part of it too. We got landscape architects: hydrologists, fishery biologists, archeologists, soil scientists. And those kinds of disciplines, they're sitting around the table and whether they're male or female, black or white, puts a different spin on the decision.

The generations that have come on line in the last 20 years have come from a lot of different backgrounds. We're not all rural; they didn't come off the farm. Most of them came out of the city, or suburbia. And so their attitudes and their value set is a huge difference. And so you're set up to have to deal with a whole different set of biases. A different set of values that are being brought to the table about what's important and what's not important.

This Forester's explanation draws forth the issue behind the Forest Service's occupational diversity. Problems and decisions are not so easily addressed by an agency that is now tangled with so many different perceptions, ideas, and values. Consider, especially, that this is not the structure that the organization was originally developed around. Rather, it has moved gradually into a composition that is convoluted with differing disciplines, viewpoints, and value systems. Add to that the increased input of the public, and this increased occupational diversity results in a more complex Forest Service. Finally add the fact that most of the upper level leaders were with the organization when it was more generally trained. They have been present to watch the evolution, and

poised to either encourage or discourage the change. The quotes included above come from two high level male leaders, and demonstrate a matter-of-fact attitude concerning the changes that have resulted.

Ultimately, occupational diversity within the Forest Service leads to a more complex organization, resulting in a more difficult decision-making process. For example, a female supervisor discussed an experience when such complexity led to distinctly different prescriptions for a particular forest. She explained that “there was no way that the burning prescription met with the silviculture prescription. And so they ended up doing some damage to the leaf trees...” This shows that the agency does not have complete control over the impact of the increased occupational diversity, but they are experiencing the consequences of the issue and negotiating the results.

### **Harassment**

Most of the female participants discussed having some personal experience with harassment. Amidst these narratives, participants described ways in which they dealt with disconfirming or threatening situations. Some women described gender-norming behaviors, such as conversation, humor, and patience, to assist their co-workers in adjusting to the gender shift.

#### **Example 1:**

...My peers had gotten used to me, but the guys that were running those sales, to see a woman and then, on top of it, a year later, a pregnant woman, come out to oversee the sales, they didn't know what to think. They didn't know how to act... And so quite often I found myself in the position where I was more concerned about making them comfortable. And once they felt comfortable, then things went fine...just be a real person. Try to help them out. And if they're having a hard time finding words or, you know how when you're nervous, finding words and finding the appropriate chit-chat.

Or whatever. Just being a real person, showing them I'm no different than anybody else.

Example 2:

It just takes time. You can't get mad about it. You kind of have to laugh about it and it takes time and you'll eventually gain their respect.

The majority of these cases seemed to result in empowering emotions because the strategy engaged served to halt and correct the threatening situation.

Educating co-workers and contractors was perceived as especially useful for proactively preventing harassment. This technique comes uniquely from women occupying leadership positions where they have the authority to require training for both external and internal employees, and also the authority to dismiss those contractors or agency employees who do not comply.

...As each woman would come by at night, going into the shower, there were cat-calls, and harassment, and so... when the companies came back to me, I went back and I said to the contractor that this isn't acceptable and if it continues, you guys are off the fire tomorrow, and so we kind of went to another level where we started dealing with our outside contractors. We had a food service worker that was doing the same kind of B.S. so I went, and the caterers are all contract, and we went and I said, "Get rid of this guy or tell him to knock it off or we'll terminate the contract." And so that was satisfying to be able to, not only after we dealt with our own crews and their education, and these people, they're not educated. We have to educate our own contractors, and so... I was real pleased with that.

Through this narrative, we can see that this female leader finds herself in a unique position to improve the work environment for women. She is capable of dismissing the outside contractor if she needs to. This position of power enables

her to not only fix the immediate situation, but also feel empowered as she protects other women from the harassment she has been exposed to.

Conversely, in cases where the harassment or unequal treatment was not successfully negated, the final impact did not seem so positive. Rather, participants expressed periods of self-doubt, feelings of over-analyzing situations, insecurities, and isolation. Reflecting back to a narrative under the first-level analysis in which one woman discussed a situation where her superior had intentionally overlooked her, consider the rest of her explanation:

It was just one of those very subtle ways of hearing that "you're really not in the power group..." And... pushing wasn't gonna get me anywhere. And I thought I had done a good job of proving myself, but I just couldn't get over that hump of being one of the chosen few... personally and professionally, it was really hurting me.

The lack of support and resultant isolation placed this woman in a powerless situation where her only means of recovery was escape to a different job in a different location. Possibly because she escaped from the situation rather than receiving protection and experiencing reparations, the scars remain, influencing her own leadership style. Specifically, when she describes her philosophy of leadership, she notes that "when people that work for you get into precarious situations, supporting them and not blaming them" is important.

Through each of these narratives and examples, it is clear that an individual's ability to respond to harassment, the support of the people around them, and access to successful reparation strategies are key to successfully negotiating threatening situations. Whether the harassment is concluded positively or negatively for the victim serves as a controlling factor, ultimately

impacting their perspective of the organization, of themselves, and affecting their resultant leadership style.

### **Gender and Power**

Some narratives focused on circumstances women found themselves in that demonstrated their perception of control over a situation, alluded to whether they felt they had power or not, and described their response to that particular situation. These narratives especially focused on their initial experiences upon entering the Forest Service. There were also stories that talked about more recent times, when women first found themselves in a management situation.

### **Women Entering the Agency**

There were many stories told by female participants about their personal experiences during the early years of their employment with the Forest Service. Though there seemed to be a general belief that their experiences with the agency were good, most had some gender-oriented stories to share about their first days. Here are a couple of examples:

#### **Example 1:**

I can remember my very first day on the job, meeting with the crewmembers. And I didn't know any of them... they'd all worked together the summer before, so I'm the new kid on the block. I'm the first female on the crew, and I just remember one guy taking me aside and saying, "Look, I'm not gonna change what I say, I'm not gonna change how I dress, I'm not gonna change this, I'm not gonna change that, just 'cause you're here." And I said, "Fine, neither am I" and after that we were great friends and everything worked really well. But they were really worried about having to change how they behaved because I was on the crew.

#### **Example 2:**

I remember the first couple times I went to fire camp, I was petrified. Because it is a very scary situation to be a woman and you're surrounded by guys, and so I would just stick with the guys



on my crew, and I would not go anywhere without 'em. I just kinda glued myself to one of them and I would always... "Will you walk me to the showers" and stuff. I remember it was in California, we used to work with Con crews, and that was really scary because they weren't around women except when they would get out, and it was just like "ooooohhhh." I mean... they were guarded, not that they would do anything, but it was creepy.

In the first example above, the female participant relates a circumstance where she was most likely the first woman that her co-workers had been required to work with. Her response to the event is generally positive and, in fact, humorous, indicating a personal sense of power and control within the event. She did not sound like she felt threatened by the situation, but rather seemed to view it as less of an issue than her counterparts did.

In the second example, the female employee describes a process of obtaining protection through association with male co-workers. With this, she draws on the male's inherent power in a male-dominated organization to enable her own success.

Most stories told by both women and men about their experiences as women first entered the agency 20 or 30 years ago usually are told in a similar tone as these. There is usually a sense of amusement mixed in, as the narrator looks back humorously at early experiences with the agency. Here is a story told by a man about the first time he managed a fire crew that had a woman on it:

First one, come in as a firefighter. And first fire we had... I had her crew boss come up to me with, "Hey... we've got a major problem here". I said, "well... what's the major problem". He said, "Well the major problem is, what if this young lady needs to go to the restroom out in the woods?" 'Cause see, you never had to worry about there being females before, so you didn't have to worry about

it, so you just go when you gotta go. Well, this became a major problem for this person, that he hadn't thought through well enough. I says, "What do you do? Go behind a tree?" He says "Yeah" and I says, "Well, what the hell? She'll do the same thing, I'm sure!"

So, about 3 hours later, he comes running down the line, just beat red, and here we're fighting fire, this guy comes running down the line beat red, sweating, and he says, "... I told you we were gonna have a major problem, Dammit!" I says, "... What's the problem?" He says, "Well she had to go, she dropped her drawers right in the middle of the fire line!" So the gal didn't have any problems, but the guy sure as hell did! So that was my very first event with females coming in the organization!

This story demonstrates the humor with which many Foresters recall their first experiences working with women in the Forest Service. It also shows how the experiences are generally viewed as successful. Finally, this story underscores the value of supervisory support, and how it assisted women at being successful in their new endeavors.

A woman who talked about her first experience in a management position provided another example of this. She was on a shift opposite a male supervisor, who was superior to her only in their length of time-in-position. She talked about how her male counterpart would regularly sabotage her:

He would tell me, "These are the things you're supposed to do tomorrow while I'm off," and I'm not knowing that we're not supposed to do those things. We'd do them and he would have set up to have somebody from the office in there to make sure they saw me do it. That kind of stuff. But he got found out and he ended up actually getting fired eventually, and I got a permanent job... It never really bothered me that much because his boss knew what was going on, and his boss kept talking to me about, "Just hang in there, just hang in there, don't worry, we're supporting you," and so I just kinda let it go through.

This story is especially applicable because it demonstrates both the initial resistance to women working in management in the Forest Service more than 20 years ago, and also the internal support for their success by management.

Additionally, the story leads to the idea that tokenism may not be adjusted for simply by adding more women. In this case, it was not more women who repaired the harassment, and prevented her isolation and abandonment, but rather the support of management above her, working to make sure she succeeds.

### **Women As Managers**

Stories told by women about their more recent experiences as managers include gendered situations. For example, at least a couple women have experienced times in the last five years when they were the only females amongst men at a meeting:

#### **Example 1:**

A couple years ago, I went on a forestry review with 10 people, and I was the only female. Which, through the years, it's really not a big deal because it happens all the time. Still... it's even less and less as time goes on, but it's not unusual. We are shifting to more diversity, but we're not quite there yet in some places.

#### **Example 2:**

...We went up to this guard station on a ranger retreat, which was interesting, (whispers) those guys all snore so loud. We're all in this bunk house, you know, but driving there and anywhere with them in the van, all they would talk about was killin' something, guttin' it, hunting it down.

Only one male forester discussed a similar situation that he found himself in, where he was the only man amongst a number of women. He noted it as significant in demonstrating how the organization has changed. He explained

that “20 years ago, that would have been all men. There’s absolutely no doubt about that.”

### **Leadership Styles**

Topics that fell under the ‘leadership’ category included participants’ leadership styles. This falls under the category sub-title of “Prevalent Leadership Styles,” and was usually provided in response to the direct request for a leadership philosophy. For the most part, participants provided a list of their beliefs about how leadership should be conducted, but follow-up questions often led to examples and narratives that explained why they held these beliefs.

For example, one interviewee discussed a leadership lesson he learned early in his Forest Service career. He worked for a supervisor who treated every employee equally on a social level, despite the differences in ranks. When a new ranger came in and held a social gathering to which only the higher-level employees were invited, he was not received well. The participant explained that it was through this experience that he recognized the importance of resisting the building of cliques within groups of co-workers. Concurrently, he demonstrated that it was, for him, through the observation of such events that he established his leadership philosophies.

Also under the “leadership” category were stories that showed the various ways in which leaders engaged in their leadership duties with their subordinates. As explained in the first level of analysis, all styles seemed participative, but they differed in terms of where the authority lies. Some managers seem to consider the authority to make decisions a retractable one, where they are meant to

override decisions they don't agree with. Conversely, other managers see their position as one of supporting their subordinates' decisions, regardless of whether they agree. Hence, in the later case, the authority is not to be retracted once it is delegated. An example of "retractable authority" can be found in a narrative provided by a supervisor who wasn't comfortable with his subordinate's decision.

The supervisor explained:

...We sat down and kind of went at it over each of our positions... we sort of ended up in the same place. I'm not sure he got out of that what he wanted, but I got out of it what I wanted... I think [he] moved more than I moved... I'm his boss and he was gonna come that way... but we ended up in a good place.

Conversely, another supervisor told a story of when she refused to step into the authority position she had delegated to her subordinate. In this case, the subordinate would have liked the supervisor to provide more specific direction on decisions that needed to be made, but the supervisor refused. She was willing to help, but the program belonged to the subordinate, so the authority to make the decision stayed at that level. Together, these two stories demonstrate different perceptions concerning the placement and permanence of authority.

Other stories that fall under the category of 'leadership' demonstrate ways in which the Forest Service organization has changed over the last 20 years. Referring back to the quote that parallels changes in the agency with the increase in the number of female workers and leaders, it seems that one of the biggest resultant changes is in leadership style. Many foresters talked about how styles were at one time more authoritative in nature, but that such a strategy would not be a successful tactic now for an up-and-coming leader.

## Support

Most participants indicated the value of having 'support' from peers and especially from their own supervisors and leaders. This falls especially under the leadership philosophy indicated by a few supervisors that one should focus on another's success, and through that, one will also succeed.

The need for support was especially expressed in relation to promotions. Having the support of peers and supervisors seemed to be key to getting a promotion. A number of times, participants indicated that they got a job because they "had a lot of support." One female manager explained:

I did end up applying and he did end up offering me the job. And what I found out later was that I had a lot of support both on my district, my next district ranger over was a woman and she really, and the deputy really supported me, and so I was really surprised at my level of support.

It also seemed important to have peer and subordinate support when supervisors were poised to make a decision. Many talked about needing to go around to individuals and garner their support before making the decision. Other key statements that indicated the importance of support included the following:

- "I was interested in it and I had the support for it, so I did it."
- "Coming to this job, I felt like I had really good support."
- "I had to have the support of the timber people in the forest."
- "If there are other candidates that have been, they probably would be given priority, unless there is an inordinate amount of support for me."
- "We need to be more supportive, and not as non-constructive. We need to be more constructive with our interactions."
- "Worked for a very supportive ranger, which was good because going into that staff level position, was a challenge."
- "He came to our meetings and he was going to retire in a year, and he really didn't care. He didn't believe in it. He didn't support it."

### **(De)Centralized Organization**

There was indication that the ultimate power of decision-making does not rest with the decentralized offices within the organization. The appointment of promotions is a good example of how the decentralization of power in the Forest Service is delegated in such a way that the authority found in the decentralized locales is retractable if deemed necessary.

It was not uncommon for a forester to speak of a position they were almost given by the local, decentralized leaders, except that the decision was over-ridden by the central leaders, otherwise known as "the Washington office."

- "I applied for [another position] and wasn't selected. It was kinda hard because it was supported by a number of the folks locally, [but it was for] an area that had to be approved in Washington."
- "They really wanted me but when I went back to D.C. And this is very common, I've learned. D.C. decided there was somebody else that was gonna be in that job."

This is not a process that is taken lightly or always received well. Such retraction or undermining of authority can cause trouble:

I've been in a number of jobs where I wasn't the person that my boss picked... My boss wanted somebody else but they ended up with me because their boss overruled them. And that's happened I don't know, four, five or six times. And most of the time it doesn't cause a problem. But a couple times, it's caused big problems.

These examples demonstrate the ability for the centralized or national office of the organization to override decisions made by the decentralized offices. The statements also show the attitudes with which employees respond to such overriding power. Rather than object, the attitude seems to be accepting, despite dissatisfaction. They see the possibility of decisions being overridden as a

common occurrence, and although it may cause them hardship, it is simply the way things are.

### **Personal-Organizational Tension**

Across the board, there was a lot of discussion that indicated a tension between personal issues versus the needs of the organization. While this was a tension that seemed to be being negotiated by all participants, there seemed to be a general perception that women deal with the tension more intensely than men.

One male forester told two stories that compared his personal experiences with a male and a female subordinate who were each dealing with the struggle of their personal and professional needs. His narratives expressed a perception that the woman fussed over her decisions more openly and to a much greater extent than did the man.

Choosing organizational needs over personal needs includes being willing to move where other employees may not be so inclined to go, planning a pregnancy around the fiscal year, and making it clear in a new relationship that moving is inevitable and non-negotiable. Electing to serve personal needs before organizational needs includes deciding that the family will not move during the children's high school years, only moving if both spouses can find acceptable jobs, and refusing to have both parents travel at the same time. The personal decision to not attempt to progress to the next level in the hierarchy prevents a need to move for the agency.



Just 20 years ago, what the individual needed was not an issue in the eyes of the agency. Today, what is going on in the individual's life matters. Policies that allow children in the workplace, flexible time schedules, and working at home, have been developed to enable personal issues to be more easily resolved. That these policies have been developed to enable personal negotiation of issues demonstrates that this change is a general one throughout the Forest Service.

### **The Power of the Unwritten Rule**

One function of narratives in an organization is to disseminate guidelines or rules that the organization believes in or lives by. As mentioned in the first-level analysis, one of the unwritten expectations or rules of Forest Service members is that they are required to move each time they take on a new position. According to the interviews I conducted, those rules seem to be as follows:

1. A line officer 'normally' should stay in a particular position for only one or two years before progressing to the next higher position.
2. A line officer is expected to physically move to another location when taking the next higher position. (Not moving the entire family doesn't seem to count.)
3. This progression must move through particular "chairs" in a specific and standardized order.

Every one of these rules seems to be changing. At a minimum, each is regularly being broken, although their existence and importance is agreed upon by most. The existence and persistence of these rules is established by the consistent awareness of them by all interviewees, as the following quotes attest:

- “But still, the bottom line is, if you want to progress to whatever it is that you want to grow up to be, then you’ve gotta go through the right chairs. So you’d best be thinking about that as your career moves along.”
- “To really get promoted, you have to be in a position where you can take jobs and move.”
- “If you want to continue to get promoted and progress, you have to be willing to move.”
- “If you want to have advancement opportunities then you need to be willing to move.”
- “I think a lot of it is, I’ve been willing to move and able to move around.”

There is organizational power in requiring the upper levels of supervision, specifically, to move when they get promoted, and to expect them to do so frequently. Moving every couple of years or so prevents the leaders from settling in and identifying with the communities they live in. Rather, the foresters identify with the Forestry Service, the one familiar thing in every town they live in. One forester explained this viewpoint:

One way to make sure people stay on the straight and narrow is to move them quite often. Don’t let them get comfortable enough to shake it up. [It’s an] inherent cultural norm in the agency. Even if you’ve done it for five years, when you move they have a whole new group of people to deal with: Different employees, different issues, different environment, politicized, location, problems. So you know a lot, have done the job and been successful. It shoots you down the ladder. Maybe not to the bottom rung, but you’re down the ladder, because you have to learn all this again: Who’s the power players in the community? On your staff? Who is the informal leader?

This explanation comes from a forester who feels he understands the motive behind the unwritten expectation that a line officer will move frequently for promotions. It shows an employee’s awareness of the power the centralized portion of the organization has, despite the decentralized structure.

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, the Forest Service organization is changing. Personal limitations to an individual's ability and desire to move now carry more leverage. While such objections to moving most likely did exist 20 or more years ago, there is indication that one distinct organizational change is the individual's ability to more readily control if, when, and where they move. One forester explained briefly what the expectations used to be: "When I was first in the Forest Service, the standard was you moved every two and a half years." Other interviewees demonstrated similar awareness of how the agency expectations are changing:

Traditionally, the Forest Service was very much, you moved. You moved for promotions, you moved for broadening your background. I mean every two years I hear people talk about moving, if not sooner. That was kind of expected. Nowadays, when you're applying for a job, mobility is still looked upon favorably, that you've been through a bunch of places. Because you get to see things very differently in different locations.

But it's just not as expected. I don't know if our lifestyle has changed or if the Forest Service is an older organization now. There aren't a lot of young folks coming in in training positions, and so when folks get in their 40's and early 50's, they're pretty set family-wise and community-wise, and aren't as willing to pick up stakes and go as they might have been earlier in their career.

This idea that the requirements to move have changed was also supported by the fact that a large number of this study's participants, all of whom were fairly high-level supervisors in the region, had not moved for more than the two year requirement that the unwritten rules seem to dictate. While some participants had been in place for only months or a couple years, others had been in their current job for greater than five years. Those who intended to continue progressing did have at least vague designs on their next movement;

others who were closer to retirement seemed to be projecting how long they could hold out in their current location. This indicates a greater personal sense of control over their movement and progression than members indicated there used to be in previous years with this agency.

While the organization does seem to be changing distinctly in its actual movement requirements and who controls that movement, the belief that moving is important for progression still stands. This continued expectation is found in one narrative about a woman who made a conscious decision to not move as she progressed. It is as much to her surprise as anyone's that she has successfully moved up the ranks, despite her resolution to remain in one geographical location. She holds herself personally accountable for that decision, explaining that she consciously and openly chose to not move, recognizing at the time that it very well should have prevented her from advancing. She explained, "...it was my personal choice... we all make personal choices in our lives, so I thought, fine, if this is where I am and that's all I ever do, that's fine with me. This is my choice." She referred to it herself as having "not paid her dues." In this, she seems to support the expectation of moving to progress, despite her own non-compliance with the standard. In her non-mobile progression, she is the rare exception, not the rule.

The reasons she cited for preferring to not move were consistent across most other interviews. Specifically, she was unwilling to move because she saw it as prohibitive to a happy family life. Many people noted the difficulties that moving can cause in the personal life, especially when it is the woman in the

relationship that is initiating the move. This seems to be attributed most frequently to the tradition that women follow the men, and to the family responsibilities that women maintain while they work. One female forester explained the traditional perspective:

It would be more typical for males, because a lot of times the women, especially in earlier years, would follow the man's career. And so I was sort of rare that at that time, I was married and my husband was willing to follow me. And that is rare, and more difficult to do that. ... Traditionally, the male would have the job and the woman would transfer around... and that's one of the ways that you advance, is you get experience in your different areas, and that increased your likelihood to promotions and that would give you that experience. That's a little more difficult to do now, with dual career families, no matter if male or female. But in the 70's, it was more traditional that the female would follow the male, not the male would follow the female.

This story indicates that either behaviors or perceptions of behaviors have changed significantly. This quote talks about the strictness of women following men in past tense, and indicates that such actions have not only changed, but also become more complex and difficult to manage. She speaks of her husband's willingness to follow her as rare. However, many of the women interviewed cite similar experiences, like in the following quote: "To make the moves I've made in the Forest Service, I would've either had to stay single or be married to the kind of person I'm married to." While it may take special circumstances to enable the man to follow the woman, or for a couple to negotiate dual careers, the multiplicity of similar stories indicates that the situation may no longer be quite so rare.

Whether there are children, the age of the kids, and their level of care needs is often key to the flexibility of a family's situation. The responsibility

seems to inherently fall on the woman, despite her high-ranking career position. Consider, in turn, the female manager who's husband cares for their children. She said, " He takes the kids. He does all the doctors and dentists and orthodontists. I haven't been to one doctor or dentist appointment for years." She also said that hers is an unusual situation, and that her husband is venturing into unknown territory for his gender, just as she is.

This is also a valid viewpoint for those families needing to care for aging parents. The situations seem parallel. A few participants at least referred to circumstances amongst their subordinates where this is an issue. It didn't seem unusual to have an employee who needed to take time from work to care for an elderly relative.

Thus, care of the kids, the aging parents, and the family overall seems pivotal to the personal decisions that employees need to make. The desire to progress further in one's career also seemed crucial. Such progression requires geographical movement, which may put into jeopardy the necessary care and provisions for young or invalid family members.

Some women spoke of having found advantage in the expectation that they would be moving in order to progress. They had utilized this requirement as a method of escape from a bad situation. One woman, for instance, found it as a means of escape from under a supervisor that was excluding her:

...A project would come up and I would just get overlooked. And I thought, "That just doesn't make sense." So I... confronted the person and they said, "Well, I didn't think of you" and I thought, "Well, that's real telling, 'cause... I was the only one on the staff [who was trained for that]... They tried to turn it around like I had the problem, and maybe I did, but they were not willing to take any

ownership at all. That's when I started thinking it was time to move, 'cause I realized I was at an impasse... So, for me at that point, the best option was to move, because... it was really hurting me... That's the one thing great about the Forest Service: If you're in a tough situation, you have that option of applying for jobs and moving.

Another woman discussed her bitter feelings after being passed up for a position that a male of equal experience got over her:

Participant: I was pretty bitter about that particular selection, but the line officer at the time was a very traditional male and really felt like you had to put in your time in different things. And I don't think we see that quite as much anymore...

Interviewer: What did you do in response?

Participant: I moved. [laughs] That's kind of one of the great things about the agency, you know? That movement is sort of valued in some respects. And so there are some situations where the best thing is to take yourself out.

Through this is found the flexibility of the unwritten rules. They are intended for the purpose of organizational control and they are the processes through which employees gain more experience and higher status. Also, they serve as a method of escape from a bad situation. Their flexibility is increasing as more people become exceptions to the rules and are not held in negative standing for it, unlike the woman who made the decision to not move so many years ago, and yet is still seen as not having paid her dues.

### **Summary of Second-Level Analysis, Part A**

In this first section of the second-level analysis, key categories from the first level of analysis were analyzed in terms of 'leadership' and 'power,' with gender temporarily infused. Themes were drawn out more objectively, though the analysis remained fairly close to the participants' words. Next, gender is

extracted more fully from narratives as some of the first-level categories are interwoven with the literature review.

### **Second-Level Analysis, Part B: Gender**

In the first level of the analysis, collected narratives were categorized by topic, listing out and discussing themes that emerged during the interviews. In the first half of this second level of analysis, those categories have been analyzed for links to leadership and power. Now, many of these emergent topics will be interwoven with previously discussed literature and research in such a way that gender will be the focus rather than an embedded lens. Through this, key themes will be brought forth, building towards the third and last level of analysis.

### **Gender Integration**

As explained in the literature review found in chapter one, women in the paid workforce have become a common presence, but their movement upward in the hierarchy has been limited in many sectors (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). Over the last 30 years, the female presence in the Forest Service has increased steadily. Women have worked their way up, permeating the leadership levels of the organization so that today, 25% of the leadership in Region 1 is female.

The level of integration that the Forest Service now enjoys has been forthcoming across the more than 20 years that all of this study's participants have been with the Forest Service. Every one of them had a story to tell about when they first came into the agency, and how the organization has changed during



the time that they have been with it. Hence, an underlying point behind most collected narratives is that the organization has been changing, and it continues to do so. One forester especially noted that, while a cause and effect cannot be more than implied, many of the changes have paralleled the integration of women into the agency.

Of these major changes that have taken place, narratives indicated that leadership styles and organizational expectations are different today than they once were. Leadership has become overwhelmingly participative in nature. Conversely, the authoritative style that was once so prevalent is now referred to as "old school," and is perceived as an unsuccessful mode of operation in today's U.S. Forest Service for those who are up-and-coming. Those people who are closer to retirement are the only managers who seem to be allowed to engage in authoritative leadership styles, and they are perceived as exceptions. As noted earlier, women have only been in the agency for 20-30 years, and only been in leadership positions since 1976 (Albertson, 1993). Hence, the only people close to retirement and excused as being of an "old school" leadership style are male.

### **Negotiating Barriers**

As stated in the literature review, factors that female executives perceived as key to sustaining the glass ceiling are (1) male stereotyping of women, (2) women's exclusion from informal communication networks, and (3) lack of experience in management positions (Catalyst, 1999). Some narrators told of a few instances where women have had to endure stereotypes, but most prevalent were situations where women were excluded from central gatherings or

associations, and where they were moved into positions for which their own preparation was in question.

It must be noted that the majority of those stories, including this last one, focus on a timeframe from at least 20 years ago, when most of the participants were first joining the agency. Many of the stories do embody the factors put forth as sustaining to the glass ceiling, but more recent narratives demonstrate that the agency stands to represent the possibility that such barriers can be transcended.

Because women have only moved into leadership positions since 1976 (Albertson, 1993), they are still accomplishing some of the "firsts" of their gender. For instance, a number of these stories talk about a particular woman being the first female in an otherwise all-male crew, and needing to deal with the crew's initial discomfort with the situation. One forester explained that on the crew where she was the first female, "they were really worried about having to change how they behaved because I was on the crew."

Of "exclusion" stories, the following two seem to be the most poignant.

One woman talked about her first assignment to a fire crew:

20 years ago, at least when I first started, there was much attempt to make you not successful. I guess when I first started, I was picked up on this training position and brought to Oregon. I get there in the [fire] season, and a lot of crews are going into the woods, which is what I thought this was about. And they set me down with a bunch of printouts with input sheets, and I was supposed to verify that the stuff had been put in. I said, "Well, this is ok, but you know, I don't plan to do this all summer." And so they put me out on brush crew, running a chain saw with the fire guys. Kind of, I think, as a challenge, you know. "We'll give her what she's asking for." I liked it. I mean, I liked it a whole lot better than looking at paperwork.

This narrative portrays the intent of the male supervisor to cushion the female, working along the stereotypes of women's work. It also shows intention to isolate her, and then to bombard her with work they don't think she can handle, for the sake of making her fail.

Another story of isolation was described earlier in this paper. One woman talked about how she was overlooked for job assignments that she had been uniquely trained for. When she would bring this to her boss's attention, he would say she was paranoid. In this case, the woman took advantage of the requirement that one must move to progress, and found a new job where her boss would be more like a mentor and help her succeed rather than induce her to fail. This story stands out especially because the experience affected the female forester's leadership style. This same forester later talked about the importance of supporting her subordinates, trusting them, involving them, and "When people that work for you get into precarious situations, supporting them and not blaming them."

Amidst discussion, most foresters explain that these stories portray an agency that, for the most part, no longer exists. For example, when asked what it was like to be a woman in the Forest Service, one female forester explained that "...over the years it's certainly changed, but I right now don't think there's any difference between being a man and a woman [in the agency]."

As the stories of exclusion show, having had to deal with such barriers while moving up the hierarchy certainly puts today's leaders in a position of management where they can prevent such obstacles from existing in the lives of

their own subordinates. Individual attitudes at the leadership level seem to be key to moving the agency past such encumbering behaviors and into a more enabling disposition. Some narratives about more recent times depict a current intolerance of behaviors that maintain female subordination, and so serve as an example of how agency attitudes have changed.

For example, one female leader talked about a fairly recent sexual harassment issue. She was part of a team that was formed to deal with sexual harassment on a fire crew. She was surprised at the ability for such a situation to exist in the agency in the present day. This example also demonstrates how the agency still has work to do. Although the perpetrator was punished for his misdemeanors, another section of the agency bailed him out, undermining the previous redress. The interviewee telling the story expressed disgust at the minimal punishment the perpetrator ultimately received.

Similarly, another participant discussed a situation that she encountered only six years ago. She explains the situation as follows:

There were a number of... brand new employees – men, women, and folks of color that had come on the district – that were not comfortable, where they felt they were being ostracized, or not given information they needed to do their job or just generally not made to feel part of the team. That there was a real strong good 'ole boys network working. And nobody was doing anything about it.

And so the ranger's talking to me about it, you know, he knows he has a problem, and he can't figure out how to solve it by himself and the forest supervisor, he didn't want to hear about it. And so here's this poor ranger going "God, I've got to have some help here because things are unraveling". And so, I said, "Well, ok, we'll deal with that." Alright. Why wouldn't we? You know, we've got all this work to do and you've got a fairly young work force at this location, and obviously they've worked hard to try to get a relatively diverse work group both in terms of discipline and

particularly gender. And we were just running these people off. They'd stay for awhile, and then they'd be gone.

This story is especially poignant in that it shows the persistence of stereotypes and attitudes that promote the glass ceiling. The story also demonstrates the manner in which they are being handled. Especially important here is that the female participant's part in the story is one of power, so that she is able to step up and do something about the issue at hand. Along with many other female leaders, she is now in position to continue to effect change within the organization.

Such change is not easy. This same forester's discussion of how the problem was fixed shows an involved process. As a leader, she seemed distinctly aware of the power dynamics involved, and the complications that they were creating.

... These guys were not helping the situation. They were either being silent, and not stepping in and using [their] informal power to fix something. Or they were using their informal power to make things worse. And so we ended up taking some fairly serious steps to reassign people both out of their jobs and off the unit. And then brought in a counselor to work with the whole district because people, the women in particular, were feeling like they were now the bad guys because we'd taken these actions and all the blame was being placed on them... And some of the long term white male employees felt like we were just bustin' their chops for no reason at all. And so it was this very interesting dynamics working on the unit, and the community got engaged in the issue... and spouses got engaged in the issue and so it was not a really fun thing.

But I think it was necessary to have done this. I think that to have done nothing would have been a huge dereliction of my responsibilities as the senior manager on that particular unit. I had good support from the regional forester when we started to take steps to correct the problem.

This last story portrays a recent situation where a female manager is in a position to undermine and disentangle a web of exclusion and harassment. While the experience was enlivening to her and of great benefit to the organization, there is still underlying shock that such situations can still exist in today's agency. Her perception of this is clear in her closing statements about the situation:

For me it was a real interesting sort of picture of the forest service that we had and the forest service that we'd like to become, and how do you get there. You know, how do you make sure that you are putting people in for supervisor jobs and district ranger jobs and key staff jobs that are going to deal with the personnel piece of our business as effectively as they do the resource piece of our business. And I think we're getting better all the time, but... it's just interesting to me that this was 6 years ago. I mean, you're not talking about 15 years ago. You're talking about 6 years ago.

Across the stories presented in this section about negotiating barriers, we have primarily explored the barriers through which agency members have had to forge as women have moved up the organizational hierarchy. While many of these stories portray an agency of 20 years ago, some stories indicate that change is still forthcoming. It is not, however, a question of if the changes will continue to come, but when. As one forester explained, "You work for the government. You work for the Forest Service. These are our policies. This is what we're going to do and if you can't deal with that, you need to find another job. But this is the way our organization will run."

### **Leadership Styles**

In the literature review, I discussed how a woman's power and status may be undermined because of the perception that she simply will not be as effective

as her male counterparts. Women have been known to walk a thin line between masculinity and femininity as they found their appropriate leadership style in the male-dominated organization (Haslett et al, 1992). As women, they are expected to have feminine qualities in a male-dominated environment where only male qualities are anticipated to be successful.

Some Forest Service stories reflected this struggle, viewing it as a time that has passed. A female supervisor explained how female managers used to lead:

The earlier female directors that just had to... practically literally make a scene... really have to come on strong to get somebody to listen to them. And I think that maybe that was just called for, maybe they just had to do that at the time.

Another female participants had been in that exact position:

I felt like to be successful as a woman, you had to be [aggressive]... the only way you could get heard. Maybe that is one change I have seen. The only way to be heard is you had to be pretty aggressive. And you had to get your point heard at a meeting, where you would say something and they'd kind of blow past you. And a male in the room would say the exact same thing and all of a sudden it's this great idea, and being able to say, "Hey, I said that five minutes ago. Why wasn't it a good idea when I said it?"

The focus of this last narrative is that her description is of the way her leadership style 'used to be'. She goes on to explain that she has especially focused on her communication since then, she realizes that she has the credentials that matter, and that, ultimately, "it's all about relationships."

Stories such as this one, depicting the different leadership styles, are very good at delineating the two segments of time that underlies so many narratives. Stories of "that was then, this is now" are especially prevalent for this topic. The

people who are telling the narratives have each been in the agency for 20 years, and so have been present across the course of change in organizational expectations of leadership styles. Their stories are all personal, so they are reflecting back on their own experiences 20-30 years ago, and then telling more recent narratives in a comparison, to show how things are now.

Sometimes, the focus of the story was not the leadership style of the supervisor, but rather the acceptance of that individual as leader. One participant told a story about a previous female boss that had not been well accepted into her new leadership position. She was heavily scrutinized and harassed, as the narrator explained:

Her staff was so awful to her. [One employee] even wrote a letter... I think his wife wrote the letter to the local paper about how awful they were hiring this woman, and she's unqualified, and they passed over guys that should have had this job. She just ragged on and on in this letter to the editor...

The narrator of this story then reflected back on the leadership style of the female supervisor, noting that "she really had a hard-ass management attitude" and that "she'd just kind of been the token deputy." These statements indicate her awareness of the situation that the leader had been in, as she pointed out the key elements that seemed to aggravate the situation. Her story reflects some of the reasoning behind some women taking on the role of 'aggressive supervisor,' at least in this particular case.

According to Kanter (1993), recruitment and promotion of large groups of women may be required to counter the negative effects of tokenism, including isolation, segregation, and low morale. Some of the narratives that I gathered



revealed strategies that female Forest Service leaders utilized in order to counter such token situations. One participant did note that whether a woman was isolated was a key factor, but it seems that there was more to it than isolation, as can be seen in her statement:

I never felt isolated... I had other women friends that were students and in the co-op program at the same time that ended up leaving the agency because they were so persecuted. So isolated and so persecuted that they tried to tough it out but... and particularly resource specialists were more persecuted back then, and made fun of, because you were doing something that was unpopular.

This statement shows that isolation was key to whether a woman had a good or bad experience, but having a job that was unpopular could also be detrimental to a situation. Other stories showing women moving to places where they can access mentors and have support systems from their subordinates and friends indicate that there are a number of tactics that women may utilize to improve their work situation.

One female forester talked about drawing on the men around her for protection. Her description of the experience is as follows:

I remember the first couple times I went to fire camp, I was petrified. Because it is a very scary situation to be a woman and you're surrounded by guys. And so I would just stick with the guys on my crew, and I would not go anywhere without 'em. I just kinda glued myself to one of them.

This is a similar tactic to one alluded to by Enarson (1984), which I covered in the literature review. According to Enarson, women engaged in tactics of humor, passive resistance, and flexibility in order to manage their work environment. They also drew on the assistance of male friends and sponsors, utilizing them as

protection and sharing in the power that the men held more readily in the organization (Enarson, 1984).

In other cases, a bad situation was exacerbated by the attitudes that male managers held against their female subordinates. Women being ignored in meetings, being given tasks to do that are against Forest Service policy, and being assigned jobs that separate them from their work crews are examples of how this can happen.

Also connected to this are the studies put forth by Ely (1993) that compared male-dominated to gender-integrated East Coast law firms. These studies concluded that women compared and gauged themselves according to other women in the office. If there were few other women, the perception of the ability to succeed in that law firm was more difficult to achieve. Additionally, those women who had succeeded were not respected for their authority or seen as role models. Conversely, in gender-integrated law firms, women who had succeeded stood as role models for the possible achievements of lower ranking women.

I presented this information in the literature review as prime support for definitions and examples of tokenism and its effects. Additionally, I now present it in parallel to information I found through my collected narratives. Take, for example, the female forester who was a new and lone female leader above a group of males. She cites two of the men in particular as being supportive. In her words:

“There were 2 older men on the district...who were the most wonderful people in the world. And they were determined they

weren't going to let me fail. But at the same time, they would take direction from me. If I told 'em, this is what I wanted, they'd say "ok." It was just the most incredible..."

In this statement, we find that while the forester does not cite any female as a model, she still has support. In this case, the support is from subordinate males who believe in her success. Similarly, this same female supervisor finds guidance from her husband. While she had been originally afraid of even taking the leadership position, her own husband was certain of her ability to take it, and encouraged her.

I put forth that these examples illustrate that it is not simply other women who have succeeded in the organization that countermands tokenism. Rather, it is the attitude, and the belief in the possibilities. If a woman is in a leadership position in which she can either succeed or fail, it is important that those who have put her in that position also believe she can succeed and take necessary steps to help insure that such success is possible for her. This is especially key in places where the workplace is not yet integrated, and other successful women are not available to show the possibilities of success in that particular environment.

### **Hierarchy and Upward Progression**

In chapter two, I reviewed the literature by Martin (1993) and Kanter (1993), which stated that female progression in the hierarchy is difficult to achieve, and opportunity is limited. According to the narratives that I collected, that is not the case in region 1 of the Forest Service. As already stated, 24% of the leaders in this region are female. Additionally, policies such as California's

Consent Decree and Equal Employment Opportunities have broken some of the barriers, making female foresters feel comfortable with their achievements. One female supervisor discussed her own progression:

...Traditionally, historically, one might go from a District Ranger to a Forest Staff Officer, then perhaps to D.C., and then come out as a Forest Supervisor. And I just went straight from Ranger to Supervisor... and I guess it's just that I was interested in it and I had the support for it, so I did it... I think it was just that I had a tremendous amount of support for what I was doing, and that I had been very successful in some things, and that the people that were making the decisions felt that I could do it. And I'm not the only one that has ever done it. There have been others. I didn't feel like it was because I was a woman.

This statement indicates that while the participant's progression is unusual, it is not unheard of. Important elements to negotiate such a progression include support from key supervisory personnel, and are perceived as angled towards abilities rather than gender.

Concerning female advancement and access to leadership positions, in a number of the interviews that I conducted, participants mentioned that the Forest Service had been designed in accordance with a military model. According to Fagenson (1993), this may have caused even greater difficulties for women wanting to advance in the agency. Gender labels and traditions of how women are expected to conduct themselves do not necessarily fit with the requirements of the hierarchy and leadership strategies that come with the military model.

Consider, however, that Martin (1993) cites numerous studies claiming that female management strategies are more effective and humane than those strategies engaged by men. Recall, also, the participant who perceived that leadership styles have changed during the same timeframe as women entering

the agency, potentially indicating a cause and affect scenario. Regardless of whether women entering has caused the change in leadership styles and expectations, the point here is that leadership style expectations are more people oriented and less task oriented, aligning more readily with the style of leadership that is often associated with female managers. This is directly in accordance with Fagenson (1993), who anticipated that expectations and organizational ideologies would be impacted by the increasing presence of women in the workplace. According to U.S. Forest Service narratives and interview discussions, this seems to be the case.

### **Summary of Second-Level Analysis**

In the second-level analysis, key categories from the first level of analysis were expounded upon in terms of 'leadership' and 'power'. That was followed by a focus on gender within the narratives as they intertwine with the literature reviewed at the beginning of this paper.

In this next segment, the third-level analysis is presented. This level is more pragmatic in nature, stepping further away from the narratives and into a more thematic sense of the meaning behind the narratives. It is through the third-level analysis that my conclusions are drawn.

### **Third-Level Analysis and Interpretation**

In the third level of analysis, I move towards more general conclusions about gender, leadership, and power. In this section, the themes that have been presented in previous sections are brought together to generate interpretations and conclusions about the triad of issues being focused on in this study.

#### **Pragmatic Implications of Stories**

This third level of analysis is more critical than the previous levels, as it steps further away from the narrator's words, and allows more space for my own insights into the meanings and impacts of stories. In framing stories in terms of their pragmatic possibilities and pragmatic effects, I take two viewpoints.

First, there is pragmatics in terms of hard, concrete evidence. In this, we look at the behavioral and attitudinal impact of the story being told. That a respondent has a story indicates the effect of the story. They tell the narrative, then follow it with a "moral" or statement that frames the story for the listener who, in this study, is always the same person (the interviewer). The episode or event that is recounted in the narrative indicates a course of action, and a belief about whether the storyteller supports the values behind the action.

When discussed by sociolinguists, rhetorical critics, and discourse analysts, pragmatics is the capacity of a message (story) to affect action or attitudes. This would be the latent possibility for change within or because of a story. Thus, the pragmatic dimension of language-in-use emphasizes the actual or potential implications for what people do, how they think, and how they talk.

So, narratives have the potential to influence those who hear them in the latent persuasiveness of the message being conveyed. It is also possible that the story may persuade the storyteller. In their ability to tell a story that depicts their own message, the narrator may either convince themselves of the salience of their tale, or re-solidify it in their own beliefs.

In both of these definitions for pragmatics, the narrator is depicting his or her own viewpoint. Through this, an attitude is displayed that says the storyteller either agrees or disagrees with the values behind the events they are recounting.

With this, I suggest that the categories derived herein represent coherent themes or "messages" (in the broad sense) about the U.S. Forest Service, gender, leadership, and power. As speculations drawn from the narratives that were collected for this study, they can, in a sense, be seen as important and potentially influential ideas. Some may even suggest worldviews or wide-ranging understandings of "the way things are," "the way things work," or "the way things ought to be."

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

The points presented in this section draw together some of the themes presented in earlier levels of analysis. Continuing within the triad of gender, leadership, and power, these themes tend to build upon each other to varying degrees. Some points are given only brief detail in this third level, as they are expounded upon at earlier points in this study. Other themes are elaborated on extensively in this section because any earlier presentation of them is piecemeal, and now requires more explanation to sew the ideas together more fully.

### **The Changing Organization: That was then, this is now.**

In the second level of analysis, change within and throughout the organization is discussed and viewed as an overriding theme within all other topics. Throughout this third level of analysis, change is drawn out and explored. The idea that the organization is in constant change is key because it holds imperative values that are vital to "survival" in this organization. Similarly, an employee who can not keep up with the changes taking place can not keep up with the organization.

For example, the organization's primary leadership style is maintenance oriented rather than task oriented, as it once was. As one forester explained, "We've changed a lot in our organization. We're not sort of a controlling and direct kind of an organization. But we're a lot more interactive and a lot more people-oriented in trying to get our work done." As quoted in an earlier segment, this forester went on to state that an individual who is more task oriented and less people oriented is not likely to progress in the agency.

This is concordant with the statement of another forester, who told one of her employees that "You work for the Forest Service. These are our policies. This is what we're going to do and if you can't deal with that, you need to find another job. But this is the way our organization will run. I don't care what you do in the community. This is the way our organization will run."

These quotes are indicative of both the perceptions that the organization is changing, and that if employees are required to keep up with the changes or they will face negative consequences. Again, this overriding notion of change is



infused throughout the other points that are brought forth in this section. Change underlies most stories; every participant told stories about what life used to be like in the Forest Service, and compared that to how things are now. Seeing the agency through this perspective is useful for understanding the viewpoint from which participants speak.

**Personal-Organizational Tension: It's a matter of priority.**

This theme is described in some detail in the second-level analysis. It is expounded on further here, as it bears quite a bit of impact on employee life in the U.S. Forest Service, especially for women. By the term "personal-organizational tension," I refer to the needs of an employee to address personal concerns at home while maintaining the appropriate amount of attention to the work with the agency. This applies to circumstances such as having children that are sick at home on the day of a big meeting at work. Similarly, in the Forest Service, progressing up the hierarchy requires large geographical moves of an entire household, which can cause chaos in an individual's personal life.

The personal-organizational or personal-professional tension seems to be especially salient for female managers. As women have joined the work force, they have rarely, if ever, left their personal responsibilities behind. They remain concerned about the children and the household in ways that most men do not. Narratives collected for this study examine, in part, tactics that women have found to help negotiate the resultant tension between their personal and professional lives.

Prior to discussing how the Forest Service has impacted her personal life, one female forester pre-empted her narrative with the following statement:

If my career ever conflicts with my ability to be a good mother and a good wife, I'm out of here. Because my family is so, so important to me. But that hasn't even come into play. I mean, I don't want to seem like that's a rub. It isn't, but I just say that because that's how strong I feel about being a good mom.

Through these words, it is clear that this forester has decided upon her strongest priority within the tension she feels between work and home. Putting her family first does not mean that she discounts her career, but to have set the priority may very well enable her to be a better employee because she knows where it fits in the scheme of things.

Another female forester provided a similar example while discussing the timeframe during which her children were born. She explained that the department she worked for allowed her to work from home while her children were very young. In the 'moral' segment of her story, she explained how she felt about the experience:

So having them help me work through it, I think they ended up with a better employee who was a lot more productive. So it worked out in the long run for everybody involved. And having to deal with two children and the travel schedule I have, I found that if you can accommodate family situations, I think you end up having a much more productive person in the long run anyway. So those needs I truly think are our top priority.

Through this, it is clear that the forest service has been elemental in helping women negotiate these tensions. Some of the newer policies, such as "Babes in the Woods," and the flexibility that has been demonstrated through these narratives seem to be key to reducing the stresses that women face.

Narratives have also shown how policies and flexibility have impacted male managers. Few of the interviews portray men negotiating the same issues as women, although men do find similar benefit to the changes that women have encountered or instigated.

One example of the tension a man might experience can be found in the story of the new father who chose to bring his infant to work under the “Babes in the Woods” policy, because his wife could not. Another narrative depicted a man who would rush from work to pick the kids up:

His wife... works until 6:00 every night and he's gotta get the kids from day care right at 4:30, and take 'em home. Well, a lot of times we'd come in from the field and [he] would just be out of that van and blasting off, and [the boss] would criticize him about that. It's like [the boss] didn't get it. He had to go get their kids or they're gonna be sitting on the sidewalk.

This story demonstrates how Forest Service policies and flexibility enable both men and women to negotiate the same tension between personal responsibilities and organizational obligations. It also shows that not all supervisors are completely understanding about male or female situations. The manager in this last scenario actually looked down upon the male employee who needed to move quickly to pick children up from school. This is where gender stereotypes may be engaging, since the need to run to pick up children might have been more acceptable in a female employee, and may have even gone unnoticed.

As I mentioned earlier, Forest Service managers must move to a new location in order to progress upward in the hierarchy. For anyone wishing to take this route, other personal-organizational tensions must be dealt with. In moving

every two to three years, personal lives are barely settled before they are uprooted. While the fine details may be different for singles and marrieds, the base situation is the same. One woman looked back to how she handled having to move when she had a boyfriend, hence an uncommitted relationship. She explained:

At that point in my life, I just chose career first, because that was the right thing to do. So... I basically told him that "I don't plan to live here very long, I plan to move around a lot and if you still want to go out with me that's fine, and if not, oh well."

A male forester talked about a single female employee that he once supervised who fretted endlessly over the tension of whether to move with her career in the agency, or stay in one place to start a family. He also said he had a male employee that was married and in a similar situation because his family didn't want to move, but he needed to if he was going to advance in the organization. In the latter case, the man made at least the temporary decision to stay where he was, and not progress, in order to meet the needs of his family.

For people with children, the high school years seem to be the most precarious. Anyone with children labels those years as the most important to providing a stable environment for their kids. One male forester explained how he dealt with having to move while his children were in high school:

I told [my daughter], "If I don't do something with a different job by the time you start your junior year of high school, then we'll stay here... It was like three weeks before her junior year started, I get the job... and moved... and that was devastating to her. In fact she didn't speak to me for three months. I mean literally, didn't acknowledge the fact that I was alive. But she got over it, and she graduated from that school. And the boy... I made a promise to him that he would graduate from [there]... And the youngest one... she was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and I told her she would not graduate [there] so she didn't expect it.

This is a poignant narrative because it shows the certainty with which this forester knew he would be moving, as well as the process with which he negotiated the stress between his family's needs and the requirements of his job. Later in the story, he explains that in order to facilitate his son graduating from the school as promised, the son stayed behind with some friends in that town while the family moved on. Other stories were collected that discussed similar tactics, enabling an older male child to stay in a preferred school. Interestingly, if this tactic was never discussed concerning a female child.

Additionally, this narrative indicates one of the benefits to being involved in an agency where there is so much movement. The network that people establish becomes fairly spread out across the United States so that leaving a child with a friend while the family moves on is totally conceivable.

Another advantage seems to be that, while the move is unavoidable, it can be planned for. For example, one female forester explained that she would like to move one more time and get settled into a place before her son gets into high school, so that he can go through one school without being moved around. It is not so much that she can control whether she has to move, but she can attempt to assert some control on when and where.

Similarly, another forester explained, "I'm only a year and a half into this job. I fully expect to see my ninth grader through high school [here]. I got awhile to look around and figure out what that next job is."

All of these stories, and others collected but not presented here, indicate that the organization's expectation that they must move if they intend to advance causes great stress and important decision-making processes. The decision of what ultimately take priority may vary from person to person, but the concerns and issues are the same.

One thing that does vary according to gender with this topic is that some of the issues mentioned here, most men had never dealt with previous to women entering the organization. Prior to the 1970s, women did work for the U.S. Forest Service as clerks, but there were few women overall and their positions did not command a lot of control. As women have come into and up in the organization, family needs have moved to the forefront. This is indicative of the fact that the family responsibilities remain with the woman, even as she takes on new work responsibilities. Ultimately, both genders benefit from the changes that the presence of women in the work force has brought forth.

Flexibility on the part of the agency is one element that helps individuals negotiate the personal-organizational tension. A lot of the decisions that show the flexibility of the organization are made at the local level. Participants talk about their bosses being willing to try new things and being supportive of their situations. The narrative discussed above

concerning the woman who was allowed to work at home while her children were young serves as a good example of flexibility on the behalf of the local organization in order to adjust for the needs of the employee.

At the agency level, policies are put forth to enable flexibility. Policies like "Babes in the Woods" and Flexitime give some power to the employee. It enables them to put their families first, and gives them strategies with which to work out personal issues. When personal concerns are laid to rest, the organization is left with a calm, satisfied, happier employee who can now concentrate on the needs of the agency.

**Authority: Once given, is it retractable?**

While leadership strategies discussed were overwhelmingly participative in nature, there was a distinct variance in whether delegated authority was considered a retractable commodity, or if it remained at the lowest level to which it was given.

In some cases, decisions and the authority behind them are all delegated to the employee, and they stay there. In one narrative, the participant explained that she was willing to provide support, but she would not undermine the authority she had delegated. For her, once she delegates the authority, it belongs with the subordinate.

In another narrative, the participant explained that she would work with her employees "to figure out an agenda. But I don't come with an agenda. We build one together." With this, she tells not only of sharing the vote with her

employees, but also of insisting that they participate, and not moving forward without them.

In other cases, leaders seemed to perceive authority as something to be delegated, but also perceived that authority as something that could be retracted if deemed necessary. A narrative told by a male supervisor demonstrated this scenario. First, the supervisor stated that his subordinate was “the decision-maker... I have the authority too, but I delegated it to him, so I’m not about to take it back ‘cause I don’t like the way it might end up.” The supervisor then talked about how a decision came up that his subordinate was against, but he was for:

We sat down and kind of went at it over each of our positions, and when we got all done with that... we sort of ended up in the same place. I’m not sure he got out of that what he wanted but I got out of it what I wanted... I think [he] moved more than I moved. Now whether that was, he saw the handwriting on the wall, I’m his boss and he was gonna come that way, I’m not sure, but we ended up in a good place.

In this case, the final decision seems to actually be in the hands of the supervisor, even though he claims it is with the subordinate. The boss is firm in his conviction that his own decision will prevail, even though the decision-making process and authority had been passed on.

The narratives presented herein are not meant to outline the only possibilities of how authority is negotiated between superior and subordinate. In fact, I do not even mean to say that any manager leads with only one distinct style or intent. Negotiating both decision-making authority and one’s own



leadership style most likely vary as much according to the situation as they vary according to the people involved.

Still, I do mean to show that authority, which is a necessary part of a decision-making process, is a movable element that is sometimes given to keep, and other times taken back at a moments notice. It is with the authority that the ultimate decision-making process lies, and so it is important, in this study, to understand where that authority rests and who ultimately controls it.

A supervisor has the ability to retract delegated authority. Even if they do not choose to do so, their ability to retract the authority is their power. They ultimately hold the authority, even if it rests in someone else's hands. Hence, as participative as the leadership style may be, the power of the decision-making process does ultimately rest with the leader.

The narratives above begin to delineate a variance in how different managers view their participative leadership. They demonstrate the existence of this dichotomy on a level that is individual in nature, where the leaders are close to their subordinates and the community that they impact.

While certainly no "cause and effect" can be implied, there is certainly a correlation between how leadership is enacted on a local level, and how it is executed from the centralized portion of the organization. This is especially evident when one looks at the process through which information about the Roadless Issue was disseminated throughout the organization.

In discussing the Roadless initiative, one participant first explained the process through which information normally is distributed in the Forest Service:

...Issues used to have some discussion, even at our level... philosophy being that we are decentralized, we push as much authority as we possibly can to your level to make decisions. We're interested in what the policy means to your decision making project on the ground, and what does that mean for the local communities, and how does that affect the resources on the land. And that's the kind of concerns that, even in Washington, were held in very high esteem. And even though they may not be able to do anything that's very positive for down here, they would consult you about it and give you an opportunity to at least express those kinds of concerns.

He then went on to explain how the recent Roadless initiative had been handled differently than the standard process:

Roadless, this is what we're doing, and we're telling you, "You have to have a meeting with the public in the local community, and you have to do it by the 20<sup>th</sup> and you have to do it this way." Middle of November is when they sent us this one paragraph letter from Washington and said, "You will have these public hearings on every forest, and you have to do it by the 20<sup>th</sup> of December." Roughly one month notice. Just to disseminate information.

Another narrative corroborates this statement: "...we had no choice. We were told 'PowerPoint. Testimony. Court report [stenographer].' I would never have done that... but that wasn't within my discretion." This second participant explained that the Chief of the Forest Service had been declaring that his goal was collaboration, communication, coordination, and working with the community. She had been walking in his footsteps, asserting the same values and tactics, working with the community to improve relations.

And then out of the blue, here comes an initiative from D.C. that says (pounds on table once with fist) "We're gonna do this!" And the community's just livid. They're going, "Wait a minute. That's the Chief's decision. I thought he was the one that was saying 'Local support, coordination, collaboration, partnership.'"

Collectively, these narratives show how the tension concerning where the authority in the organization lies is not strictly at the local or regional level, but infused throughout the organization. Authority that the central offices had delegated to the decentralized forests is retractable, as the processes behind the Roadless Issue demonstrate.

### **Leadership: Nature or nurture?**

When discussing their own leadership styles, participants often told stories of personal experiences that they perceived as elemental to defining their leadership philosophies and styles. They could and did tell stories that depicted these experiences explicitly, including either a pre- or post- moral to link it to their style or belief. Hence, they had a rational explanation for their own lay theories of leadership, and could explain why they choose to view something from a particular perspective.

Participants seemed to have a process of defining how they lead and why. They would defend the rationale behind their style, putting the methods and intent into the original context from which they stem. The best example of this is the narrative about the new manager who held a party for only upper management in a locality that prided itself in avoiding division of grade levels at social events. The forester who described the event explained that he “always said... ‘I will never do that. Never.’ And I think that began influencing my leadership skills more than anything, in my early stages in the game.”

While not conclusive to whether leadership is a learnable skill or a natural trait, the ability (and tendency) for participants to provide stories of the events

that helped form their styles is certainly indicative of the learnability of particular styles of leadership. One forester, who discussed at length the experiences she had that honed her leadership style, had this to say about it:

I probably learned more about management [there] than any other job I've had in the forest service. And it was a wonderful growth experience. It's one of those places where you learn how to make decisions... probably the best training I had to be a [manager], and certainly to do this job.

Moving forward with this idea, and looking at this from a gendered perspective, consider that women are more likely to experience harassment. This may impact the leadership styles they take on, including their style of interaction and whether they give support to or perceive support from their peers. Conversely, men are less likely to experience harassment, so they may not pick up specific leadership techniques or perspectives that women otherwise do.

Consider, as well, that over the last 20 years, it has not been only female leadership styles that have changed. Rather, the entire organization's expectations of what leadership styles need to be has shifted, so that both men and women lead with less focus on the task at hand, and more focus on the people involved.

Also, as the number of female leaders increase, their subordinates, both male and female, will learn from them. So, as long as "observation" and "experience" hold as methods of learning leadership styles, integrating women into supervisory positions and thus as examples for subordinate observers, their styles, whether nature or nurture, should be picked up to at least a small degree by the future leaders that follow them.

For the Forest Service in particular, the movement that is required for progression will assist in disseminating particular styles that are more prevalent. One learns something in one place, then takes it to another location to enact it. As a decentralized organization with a requirement of moving in order to progress, such dissemination is inevitable.

Of course, both positive and negative experiences can help carve leadership styles. When a leader liked how something went, that may be picked up as a personal technique. Similarly, when a leader sees a variety of different options, they are in a position to take on style elements that work for them, and discard that which does not work for them. Their experiences carve what they believe, and how they lead.

**Tokenism: It isn't just about women.**

Tokenism is essentially a gap. It is a distance, space, or wall between the individual and their co-workers. They are different, and success is not guaranteed. The lone individual stands as a representative of their sex, and everything they do is viewed as insightful to how that sex will do in a particular situation. It is, hence, isolation as a result of perceptions, stereotypes, and attitudes.

Narratives collected and analyzed herein demonstrate that it is not just the presence of other women that prevents a sense of or the effects of tokenism. Rather, the support of other organizational members, the belief that success is not only possible but probable, and the acceptance of the environment in support

of the person are elements that enable women to succeed, even if they are isolated from other women.

Consider, for example, the female supervisor who was terrified to take on her first leadership position. Her husband supported her taking the position, despite her own hesitations. Then, two of her male subordinates were, in her words, "determined they weren't going to let me fail." It is attitudes like these that prevent tokenism. Conversely, they enabled her success. She was provided with the support, guidance, and information she needed to do her job. Additionally, those underlings who, in part, provided the guidance, would also do as she asked. She explains that "... at the same time, they would take direction from me. If I told 'em, this is what I wanted, they'd say 'ok.'"

Throughout the narratives, participants talk about support. They refer to it in terms of a necessity for getting promotions, and in making participatory decisions.

- "Coming to this job, I felt like I had really good support."
- "I worked for a very supportive ranger."
- "I had to have the support of the timber people in the forest."

These leaders are not wrong in the importance of support in this organization. In terms of gender integration and avoiding tokenism, support is vital. Take, for example, the woman who did not receive the necessary support when doing her job. She was purposefully isolated, and excluded from participating fully with her workgroup. Eventually, she took advantage of organizational expectations and moved to a new location with a boss that was more willing to mentor her. Just as support is key for success, and useful for

undermining tokenism, lack of support may do damage and isolate an individual, almost guaranteeing their failure.

At least three women described times when they took advantage of the requirement to move as they advanced in order to escape from situations where they were not supported. One, for example, found herself in a position where she was not being supported in her attempts to advance up the hierarchy. She explained that when she found it difficult to work with her boss any longer, "I moved. That's kind of one of the great things about the agency, you know? That movement is sort of valued in some respects. And so there are some situations where the best thing is to take yourself out."

Recall, now, that leadership styles are very often learned through experiences and observation. When a female leader, or even male for that matter, must go through the process of dealing with tokenism or any other depreciating treatment that holds them down, qualities such as compassion and understanding may be developed within them. People who undergo such negative experiences may learn more about how different people can be, and understand better that change to make room for those differences is better than holding someone down.

Hence, while tokenism is bad, and while harassment is bad, it certainly has been elemental in generating change in this organization. It is those people who survive such experiences, and then rise in the ranks, who are in a position to display and promote supportive attitudes through which they ultimately institute change.

**(De)Centralized Organization: Where does the power lie?**

In line with being decentralized, decisions in the U.S. Forest Service are meant to be made as “close to the ground” as possible. This is so that the best consideration for the local and impacted community can be provided. Most of the time, the organization seems to follow the decentralized practices it sets forth. However, there have been occasional breaks from tradition, such as the process of disseminating information concerning the Roadless initiative, which came down from the centralized portion of the organization. Some interviewees who reflected back on this process indicated that the centralized format of decision-making concerning this topic was not appreciated. Rather, there were sounds of anger and resentment, along with explanations of how the process could have been employed more effectively.

From this, it seems that the authority that the decentralized locations hold is a delegated authority handed down from the centralized offices. In cases like the Roadless initiative, the central office reserves the right to make the decisions themselves, rather than handing it over to the decentralized localities. This is similar to the question put forth earlier in this section about whether authority is retractable, demonstrating that this question lies not only amongst individual leadership styles, but also rests in the leadership style with which the organization is run. Asking where the authority lies is ultimately asking the question, “Where does the power lie?” In an organization such as this, where the authority is delegated, but retractable, the authority, and therefore the power, remains at the higher levels of supervision.



If there continues to be a question of where the power in this organization ultimately lies, one need only look at the promotion process to find it. As explained in previous sections, geographic movement is a requirement as leaders progress up the hierarchy. One of the participants put the use of such a requirement into perspective. He explained that frequent movement for the sake of promotions is a way for the organization to elicit control over line officers. In that way, the leader never gets comfortable enough in a particular position to work around the Forest Service ideas that he or she doesn't agree with. They stay emotionally connected to the Forest Service rather than identifying with the local community.

According to this design, decisions are made at the levels that are closest to the ground, but by someone who identifies closely with the Forest Service and thus represents the centralized view of the agency. This keeps the power in the upper level of the hierarchy, and in the hands of those who delegate, and sometimes retract, authority.

### **Diversity: What does it mean to the Forest Service?**

Diversity in terms of gender is certainly key to the changes that the Forest Service has undergone over the last 20-30 years. As one forester explained:

...We have far more females now than we ever had. Better diversity. We have a long ways to go yet, but we're doing a lot better than we ever were. It's not that it's an old boy's clique that it was when I started out. It really was a clique perceived at that time. I don't think people had that thought. I think that that's just the way life was. Then all these challenges started coming, what with the women's movement and that kind of thing, things began to change...

At the same time, diversity in this agency is not limited to gender and race. It is also about occupational specialties. A variety of participants explained how foresters used to come from just a few schools, all of which taught standard forestry programs with similar values and paths along which decisions were made. Now there are more schools than there used to be, and students often specialize or focus on a particular component of forestry. One participant explained the change as follows:

When I first started out, we didn't have hydrologists or geologists, or wildlife biologists, per se. When I went to college, I had courses in all of that stuff, and I was expected to be willing to generalize, and be able to know, and be able to understand, what to do. So that's changed. That's a significant shift, when you start bringing those people in, then you start bringing in other professional opinions, biases, and value systems.... So that's a significant shift.

The introduction of women, as well as specialized and diverse educations, makes for a complex situation. Unlike 20 or more years ago, different values, viewpoints, and techniques are being brought to the table for consideration. With this, various people come from a variety of angles while participating in making decisions. What needs to happen in any particular instance is no longer so cut and dry.

It makes sense, therefore, that leaders have become facilitators to help make the decisions. In this capacity, they walk the employees through the ideas they have each brought to the table, trying to siphon through to the most appropriate answer. Through this, relationships have become important because people need to listen to each other and understand the other viewpoints clearly. Decisions are more aggregate in nature, bringing many different viewpoints,

ideas, and facts together to come to the final determination. Participation and facilitation is, in many ways, a natural result of the more complex environment that the agency has become.

One narrative explains how the complexity resulted in conflicting decisions:

They had an incident where the silviculture prescription was to leave trees in this unit. When it got to burning in the unit... there was no way that the burning prescription met with the silviculture prescription. And so they ended up doing some damage to the leave trees. Not all of them died but...

This demonstrates the need for conversation, and for participative decision-making, so that key personnel are given appropriate notice and space for input. Add to this the law that requires the Forest Service to solicit public opinion before going forward with a decision, and many more voices continue to come to the table. With the complexity of the organization and the decisions they must make, participative decision-making has become imperative.

I do not mean to imply that this is a good or a bad situation. I do intend, rather, to indicate that the situation is just as the organization members perceive it to be. It is a complex agency, a complex situation, and the complexity is only increasing. The participative style of leadership to which the organization has turned is vital to making effective decisions. The leader is no longer present to make those decisions. Rather, they are there to insure the right decision is being made by bringing together the people who do have the applicable information. One of the narratives collected shows exactly how this decision-making process works:

We invited everybody to come and sit down, internally and externally, to come and sit down and talk about what our goals were and identify common goals. And then it was mostly a Forest Service thing, and I just kept holding meeting after meeting after meeting with everybody, saying, "Here's the problem. How do we solve it?" And the cowboys helped themselves. And so... I really believe in not bringing solutions, but bringing the problem and saying, "This is the problem. The creeks aren't working, and so the water's going to go away. And so your cows won't have anything to drink and there'll be less grass. So how do we bring the water back?" and try to explain a little of the science to them, and then let them help figure out. Because collectively, the 80 people in the room know a whole lot more about cows than I did. And so, just kind of opening that up to everybody and saying, "So how do we fix it?" And it was interesting because a lot of people respond very positively to that. You can just watch the light bulbs start clicking.

### **Summary of Third-Level Analysis**

This third level of analysis has progressed through themes that emerge from the narratives collected. Those themes were as follows:

- The U.S. Forest Service is changing, and employees must adapt.
- Employees feel a tension between their home and work lives.
- Authority is sometimes retractable, locally and centrally within the organization.
- Leadership styles are often learned through observation and experience.
- Tokenism can be managed through many tactics, only one of which is to increase the number of women.
- As decentralized as the organization is, the power remains in the central offices.
- Diversity in terms of occupational specialization has added to organizational complexity.

These themes rise pragmatically out of the narratives collected for this study. They represent the meanings and intent behind the stories shared by participants. The themes are separate in their focus as they emerge from the narratives, but many of them are linked.

For instance, whether or not authority is retractable is elemental to leadership styles at both the local and centralized levels of the organization. This point is key in that it alludes to where the power in the organization is ultimately kept – in the upper levels of the hierarchy. Connect that to the idea presented herein that leadership styles are in many ways a learned set of behaviors, built off of observation and personal experience. Add that all to the increased numbers of women in the upper levels of the agency, and you have women who are in leadership positions, where the power lies, demonstrating leadership styles that they learned through their own experiences as they moved through the ranks of a patriarchal organization. Now that women are 24% of the leadership, at least in Region 1, they are in a position to demonstrate the leadership styles they have learned, thus perpetuating the changes that are on-going within the organization, especially as they pertain to participatory leadership and attitudes about gender.

This can all be linked to the occupational diversity that the U.S. Forest Service has infused within its ranks, generating a more complex organization that must negotiate its own diversity in order to make effective decisions. The participatory decision-making style that the organization now heavily gravitates towards seems logical and mostly successful, despite stories of opposing viewpoints and conflicting forest prescriptions.

All of these themes come together to form conclusions for the U.S. Forest Service as an agency, the methods utilized to produce this study, the theory that

stands behind it, and the practical benefits of the knowledge gained. These topics will be discussed further in the next and final chapter of this study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In the last chapter, a thorough analysis of the data collected for this study was presented. In this chapter, final conclusions are drawn with respect first to the U.S. Forest Service. That is followed by conclusions with respect to the methods used for this study. Next, theories focused and drawn on are discussed, especially regarding gender, leadership, and power. Finally, conclusions with respect to practical applications are explored.

#### **Initial Thoughts**

As a study of women and work, this was a search for insights concerning female leadership, particularly in the U.S. Forest Service. It was anticipated that this study would be revealing in how women negotiate their leadership positions amongst men in an organization that is considered statistically gender-integrated. Additionally, I hoped that, through analyzing narrative data, elements of power and control not readily evident to the organizational members would be disclosed.

In the U.S. Forest Service, where women have entered recently and risen rapidly, the comparative balance and equality between genders in terms of power and leadership gives indication of how well the organization is integrating female employees. As a venue of success, this organization provides some insight into how well organizations may fair as women become more integrated in the workforce and upper hierarchies.

The three levels of analysis of individual stories that this research proposed began with a first-level, internal analysis, which took a more cultural and ethnographic approach, viewing and studying the organization's stories directly through the terms and perspectives of the participants. The second-level, more external approach searched for intrinsic meanings that may have been more difficult for the organizational members to see or articulate because of the depth of their own involvement. The third-level analysis took an even greater abstract approach that was more critically-interpretive. At this level, stories were looked at in aggregate for patterns and themes that would not be readily apparent for the organization to perceive. The themes that emerged here were pragmatic in nature; I emphasized these ideas as ways to crystallize important perspectives on gender, leadership, and power. Each of the emergent themes represents an everyday issue or worldview with respect to gender, leadership, and power that can shape interactions and attitudes.

The interplay of these analyses were elemental in determining the dominant and alternate or opposing power ideologies of the organization. Through this, implicit and explicit values, attitudes, and beliefs associated with leadership styles, roles, the gendered nature of those roles, control, hierarchy, and communicative strategies within Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service are better understood, clarifying the current standing and strategies of women in the Forest Service. This form of analysis provides insightful perspectives on women and work in today's society, helping to comprehend the roles they play in organizations, as well as the comparative roles of their counterparts. It was



hoped that this information could lead to insights on communication and leadership strategies for women attempting to advance in present-day organizations.

As women continue to join the working world and advance in organizations, their presence has become standard and expected. As their placement in executive positions follows suit, studies such as the present one may serve to assist organizations in understanding what strategies and processes do or do not result in successful integration of the genders, and thus good or bad working procedures for continued organizational success.

#### **Conclusions with Respect to the US Forest Service**

The most prevalent message found in the narratives collected for this study is that the U.S. Forest Service has been changing, and that it will continue to do so. This change is seen as on-going, and organizational employees are expected to adjust accordingly. Changes have occurred in many different domains, including but not limited to work-life balance, leadership styles, and upward progression.

Concerning work-life balance, the agency has incorporated policies to assist employees in managing personal needs. With these policies, including "Babes in the Woods" and flexible time schedules, stories indicate that two distinct results emerge: (1) Employees are happier because their personal lives are and will continue to be manageable, and (2) decentralized leaders are encouraged, by example, to utilize organizational policies and local flexibility to continue assisting employees with their needs.

This last point alludes to the power that the centralized or national office of the organization holds and maintains over the decentralized localities. The U.S. Forest Service identifies itself as a decentralized organization. However, such a label disguises the fact that the national center of the agency ultimately holds the power as the central offices set the standards for how the organization is run.

One example of this is in how the central organization wields the power they possess. They are willing, for instance, to overrule the authority they have previously delegated, setting an example for leadership styles in the decentralized locales. This can be found most recently in the events surrounding the Roadless initiative. The process of disseminating information was dictated to a great extent by the central offices of the U.S. Forest Service, much to the chagrin of the decentralized leaders. The issues that emerge from this case are twofold. First, decentralized leaders seem to feel that the authority that has been delegated to them is being undermined. Second, those decentralized leaders believe, rightly, that they know more about the needs and concerns of the local community, putting them in a better position to determine the best information dissemination tactics.

Linking to the idea that this organization learns and leads by example, the offices that are closest to the ground employ similar leadership tactics to those engaged at the national level. Across the board, decision-making processes are primarily participatory in nature. Authority to make decisions tends to rest at the lowest possible level, but many (although not all) leaders reserve the right to override decisions made as they see fit.

The participatory nature that the organization has gravitated towards has enabled it to adjust for the occupational diversity that has come about. This decision-making style enables input from the variety of viewpoints and specialties that the organization employs. This both enables and encourages the Forest Service's legal requirement to gather public opinions prior to making final decisions.

Overall, employee attitudes about the current state of affairs seem to be positive. The sense of change that overrides all aspects of the organization is seen as a good thing. There is positive response especially to the people-oriented nature of the leadership style being employed. Most definitely, it is viewed as an improvement over the task-oriented leadership of 20 years ago.

The changes that have accompanied the influx of women and more people-oriented leadership styles are especially viewed as positive for the agency. The environment is one of encouragement and empowerment. Women are, for the most part, given the resources and support they need to succeed.

As explained in chapter three, every interviewee had sometime previously been located in another region. Because of these previous assignments, many of the related stories came from experiences outside of Region 1. While this study does not in any way attempt to represent more than Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service, it should be noted that the other regions of the U.S. Forest Service are at times indirectly represented through some of the narratives shared. I believe that because of the broad geography represented by stories

told, this study's findings can be at least generally reflected upon each of the other regions.

### **Conclusions with Respect to Method**

The process with which data was collected for this study proved to be quite fruitful. Not only were narratives themselves plentiful, but also patterns and themes within those stories were distinct and consistent. I found, however, that considering only narratives created a limitation within the analysis. Strictly drawing on the organizational stories excluded participant commentary of their own interpretation of the stories, "how things are" in the organization, and participant awareness of the situation. Conversely, narratives and interview texts analyzed in concert effectively support each other, with one explaining or demonstrating the other. Because of this, I modified my methodology to admit the full interview as eligible for analysis. For future studies of this nature, I would recommend this same process. Narratives should be identified and can be extracted, but not isolated, from the interviews while undergoing analysis. In that way, the narratives remain connected to the context from which they emerged, and the participant's perspective and own interpretation is included in the analysis.

Additionally, I recommend that observational techniques be employed so that narratives are collected from a more work-oriented context rather than strictly from the interview environment. In this way, any narratives that emerge are more 'natural' to the environment, rather than extracted under a particular focus. This may also encourage a collection of narratives that are myths or

sagas, rather than limiting narratives to personal stories, as the interviews did in the current study.

Observational techniques would also be useful if the study is more generally focused, allowing the participants to determine through their narratives what is important to the organization. Observations during segments of time when participants are able to interact socially, such as coffee breaks and lunches, may prove especially useful for extracting such narratives.

Finally, I found it easier to elicit narratives from women than from men. This is most likely attributable to the differences found in male and female styles of discourse. As explained by both Campbell (1989) and Wood (1999), women are more inclined than men to include details, while men tend to focus on bare information. Campbell (1989) adds that women are more likely to invite audience participation, and to rely "heavily on personal experience, anecdotes, and other examples" (p. 13). These tactics of inclusion that women engage in may have led to more detailed stories by women than men during the course of my study.

Another contributing factor may have been that I did not tell participants that I was looking specifically for stories. I did encourage them to share narratives if they had any that could explain better the information being discussed, and then tried to frame my questions to ask for examples and stories. It is possible that a more overt search for narratives might more easily generate usable stories for analysis.

## **Conclusions with Respect to Theory**

### **Regarding Gender**

There are indications in this study that the influx of women into the U.S. Forest Service generated change in leadership strategies and styles for the organization. Interestingly, organizational leadership has shifted from a stereotypically male, task oriented and authoritarian style towards a more stereotypically female, people-oriented, participatory style.

As stated in the literature review, the number of women in the workforce continues to steadily increase (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998; U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). As these women progress into upper level positions, they rise up against the glass ceiling. Upon taking her new position as CEO of Hewlett-Packard, Carly Fiorina was quoted as saying, "there really is not a glass ceiling anymore" (AP, Missoulian, July 20, 1999, p.3). Conversely, a survey by Catalyst (1999) indicates that many female executives believe that the glass ceiling is maintained by three factors, which include stereotyping, lack of experience, and exclusion from communication networks. Narratives in this study indicate that support from co-workers and supervisors can serve to counteract the issues that otherwise prevent women from attaining success.

Tokenism serves as a good example. Most often, organizations are encouraged to hire and promote large numbers of women in order to battle the isolation, segregation, and negative affects of women working alone amongst men (Kanter, 1993; Martin, 1993). The research herein indicates that, in fact, it does not necessarily require a multitude of women to prevent a single woman

from being treated as a token. Rather, it takes a workforce of people that support that woman as a fellow worker, promoting an environment that ensures her success. Whether she is a token or not has more to do with the environment in which she works and the attitudes with which she is treated, and less to do with the genders of those who surround her.

Ultimately, the point here is that, while there certainly remains a glass ceiling in the U.S. Forest Service, and certainly in the multitude of other organizations in this country, there also exist doors within that ceiling through which women can pass. This study of the U.S. Forest Service shows many of the benefits that can arise out of the successful progression of women through and past that glass ceiling.

I asked, at the beginning of this study, whether such an organization as this, with a more equal distribution of genders, would engage in leadership styles that maintain the historically prevalent hierarchy, or if more symmetrical status positions would be taken on. This is an especially poignant question because prior research indicates that leadership strategies that men engage may be unsuccessful styles for women (Fagenson, 1993). Conversely, Martin (1993) cites numerous studies that show female management strategies may be more effective than those of men. Hence, if women are engaging in particular leadership styles in the U.S. Forest Service, and doing so successfully, the style of leadership they lean towards may prove insightful.

In fact, parallel with the time frame during which women have permeated the upper levels of leadership in this government agency, the leadership ideology

of the agency has shifted to a more participative style, much to the benefit of the employees and the goals of the organization. The leadership style is now more inclusive, enabling decisions to be made by the wider variety of occupations and publics that have a vested interest in making them. In this wide sharing of similar leadership styles and underlying beliefs, it would seem that men and women working as leaders and peers to each other have taken on more symmetrical positions to each other.

This information is insightful in that it supports previous findings depicting men and women as both able to engage in a similar style of leadership within one organization (Aries, 1998). Both the men and women of the U.S. Forest Service seem more comfortable with the current people-oriented style of leadership, rather than the task-oriented style of 20 years ago that they refer back to in comparison. The leaders of today were in the agency 20 years ago before the shift, and they all express a preference for the participative style of leadership in which they all presently engage.

#### **Regarding Leadership and Power**

I stated near the beginning of this paper that, with women's presence in the workforce steadily increasing, the question arises concerning whether women challenge or embrace the organizational practices they are becoming so much more a part of. The answer, it seems, is not a simple one. Some women seem to embrace the organizational practices that are present before they arrive; others seem to do more of their own thing apart from the organization's standard style. In still other cases, as can be found herein, historical practices meld with



the styles that women introduce, bringing forth yet another set of tactics for all workers to embrace. An environment that was once authoritative becomes, over time, participative, while still maintaining authority at the leadership levels. It is, therefore, not so much a question of "How do women adjust?" as it is a question of "How do women, men, and the entire organization adjust?" Narratives collected for this study indicate that the entire organization shifts in concordance with, if not as a result of, the increased number of women within the leadership ranks.

In that shift, it also becomes clear where the organization's power lies. This is an important question in the U.S. Forest Service, specifically. Here, let me first acknowledge that local supervisors do make many, many decisions. Thus they have the authority and the power to do so. The crux, here, is that in this decentralized organization, authority is meant to remain at the lowest possible hierarchical level, so that it is made as "close to the ground" as possible. What that level is seems to fluctuate depending on many things, including topic, responsibility, and scope of impact. At both the national and local levels, the delegation of authority does not follow the individual or their level of supervision. Rather, it follows the topic around which the decision is being made. Within that, the level at which the authority rests still may fluctuate. It may be delegated, and then retracted amidst the decision-making process. This does actually depend on the leader. Some managers specified that they would not take back authority they have delegated; others have said this as well, but then told stories that showed otherwise. Hence, the retraction of delegated authority is not absolute.

However, that both sides were discussed – that both individuals who would retract, and those who would not retract, stated their viewpoint – shows that the subject is an issue. It is up for discussion, and both viewpoints and behaviors vary.

Here, we do not talk so much about the use of power as much as we talk about potential power and each leader's perception of that power. Consider that power may reside “not simply in relations of cause and effect... but in the structured relations of autonomy and dependence that are an endemic feature of organizational life” (Mumby, 2000). Hence, that leaders hold the potential to retract delegated authority, and they have the choice of whether or not they do so, is the indicator of exactly where the power lies. It rests in the hands of the leaders, and while this is an organization that consistently states that they keep decision-making as “close to the ground” as possible, the leaders are still reluctant to release their authority to lower-level decision-makers. This maintains some level of dependence amongst subordinates, holding autonomy at the supervisory level.

Stories about authority and delegation show how Forest Service employees perceive power as a limited resource. This reflects Lukes' (1978) view of power as asymmetric, or zero-sum. The amount of power that one has, another does not. In this, power is based in competition, so that one individual ultimately has power over another, or at least more power than another does.

In this view, consider that authority in the U.S. Forest Service is delegated from the national offices through the decentralized organization to the local

offices. While the authority to make decisions is meant to rest at the lowest possible decentralized level, higher levels retain the power to override a decision made by a subordinate. Stories of the decision-making process at the national level of this organization show the extent to which retracting authority is an issue. Local supervisors who retract their authority are, in many ways, simply modeling the behavior of their superiors. Again, this is indicative not only of leadership styles and management beliefs, but also of where power lies in this organization, and in what ways beliefs and values are disseminated. One of those ways, it seems, is through example, or nurture rather than nature, if you will.

This shows the importance and potential use of narratives to uncover employee perspectives of power within their own organization. Stories told demonstrate specific examples of how power is engaged or responded to within that organization. Additionally, narratives express individual perceptions of that power. Stories are one piece of discourse that, among other things, serves within an organization to socialize members. As this, stories identify, internalize, reify, express, and disseminate ideologies of power (Mumby, 2000). When a story is told, an individual is inherently explaining "this is how it works." They are confirming which behaviors are acceptable, while denoting which behaviors are unacceptable.

### **Conclusions with Respect to Practice**

The benefit of this study has been that it provides access into the organization through both the eyes and the experiences of those people who have worked in the environment day after day for more than 20 years. As such,

it provides an accurate set of examples of their work lives through their own personal narratives. Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service stands, in this, as a representative of how the integration of women into an organization can be handled, for the most part, successfully.

For example, in the literature review, I noted that scholars are divided between supporting a need for new organizations to embrace women on more equal terms with men, and supporting the ability for existing organizations to improve, including better flexibility and support for family responsibilities (Martin, 1993). I also noted that these two perspectives, while not necessarily mutually exclusive, may also not coincide easily. The stories collected herein demonstrate a government agency's ability to make progress on both of these perspectives simultaneously. Women in leadership positions have been and continue to be embraced as efficient, effective, and productive members of management. At the same time, and in response to the greater number of women in the organization, the U.S. Forest Service has proved itself capable of being flexible in order to adjust for the personal needs of its employees through both national policy and local practice.

The information analyzed herein can also represent, to a minor degree, a sense of experiences throughout the U.S. Forest Service. Every participant had at one time or another been assigned to other localities throughout the United States, and the stories they told for this study often emerged from those experiences. States represented herein include but are not limited to Arizona, California, Maine, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

Considering that all participants of this study seemed content in the ways they perceive the agency has evolved, it can be concluded that employees consider the organizational changes to be both positive and successful. With this, one can view the U.S. Forest Service as an example of an organization that has successfully adjusted for the integration of women in leadership ranks. As such, it stands as an example to other organizations of the possibilities of success that they may reach.

The results of this research will be shared with the U.S. Forest Service, as part of my agreement with them. There is potential for further exploration in the vein of this study for the U.S. Forest Service. It directly represents only one region of the agency, but does indirectly speak for many of the other regions. It would be interesting to see how other regions fare in comparison, especially region 4, which includes California and the origin of the Consent Decree.

The information that was gathered for this study also offers practical insight to members of large organizations in general. Through this analysis, communicative strategies of female leaders in a gender-integrated organization can be better understood. Organizations striving for gender-integration may be able to derive strategies for success from the narratives found here.

### **Final Thoughts**

As a researcher, this study proved to be a great adventure for me. During the course of formal interviews, participants shared interesting stories that provided me great insight into an organization that had otherwise been simply big and ominous. Amidst these narratives, I found a great many success stories of

women surviving in a large organization and rising into the hierarchy. Such success was not without its trials and tribulations, but organizational members seem content with the current results and hopeful about the future being presented to them.

Like any other organization, the U.S. Forest Service is a study in motion. Their movement forward in time seems intent on bringing further changes, but members seem content that such promise is good. I concur with previous researchers that this organization continues to serve well the focus of longitudinal studies (Bullis and Tompkins, 1989), as it rebukes, concurs, and responds to societal changes that impact its processes. Watching how this organization adjusts and changes under such issues and pressures as presented herein can provide insight into both successes and failures of organizations to survive and thrive.

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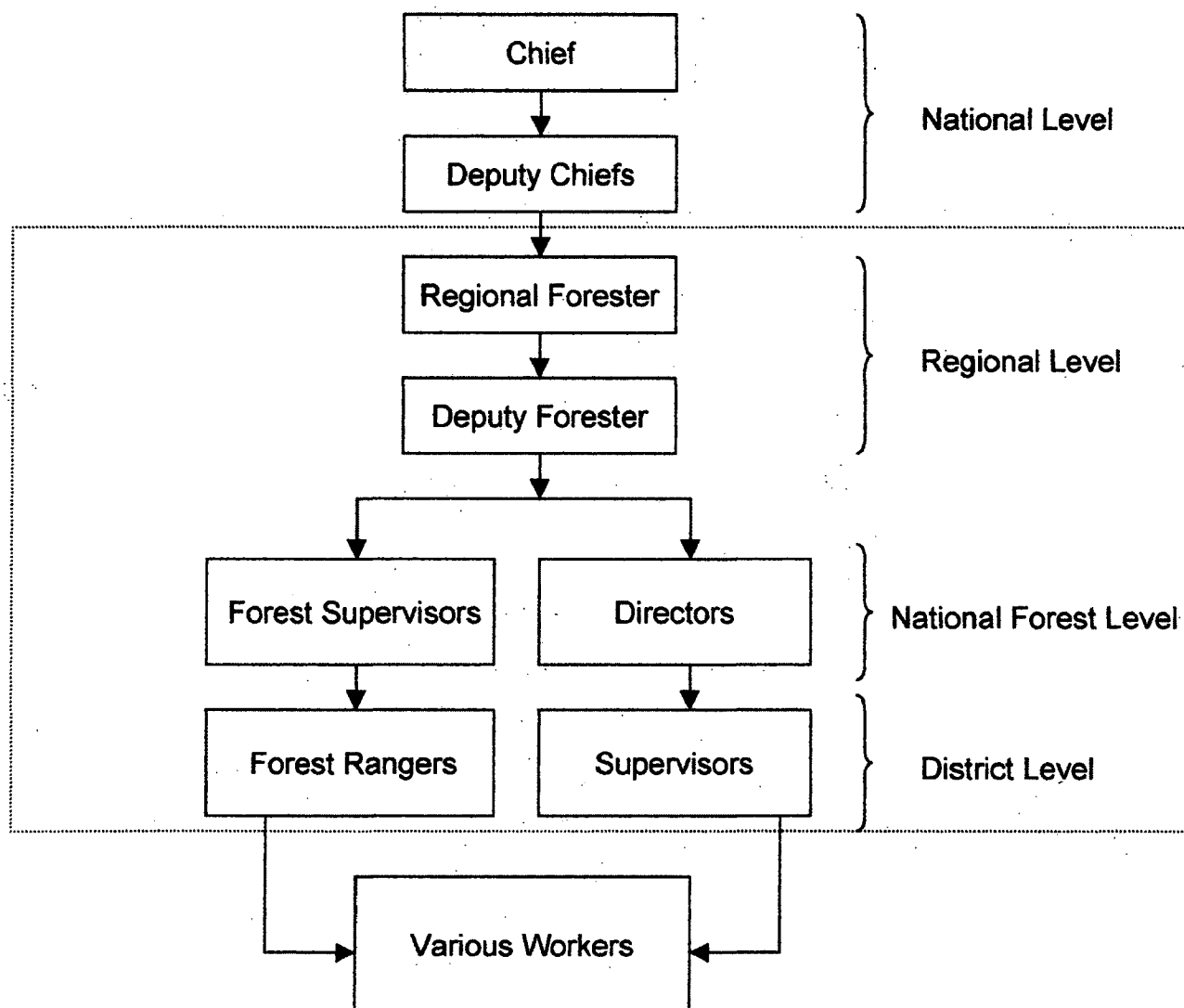
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## APPENDIX A

## U.S. Forest Service Organizational Structure





## APPENDIX B

### Pilot Interview Questions

**GOAL I:** Learn about current job & progression to this position.

1. What is your position here?
  - a. Can you show me where in the hierarchy your position is?
  - b. How long have you been in this position?
  - c. What are your formal responsibilities?
2. What other positions have you held with the U.S. Forest Service?
3. How long did it take you to progress through each of these positions?
  - a. Was yours a typical path of advancement in the organization?
4. What are your primary responsibilities?
  - a. Are all or most of your responsibilities clearly indicated?
  - b. Have your responsibilities expanded in your current position, beyond what was initially indicated to you?
  - c. With what other positions, departments, and levels of the organization do you need to interact with in order to get your job done?
5. Describe for me what a typical day might be like for you.
6. What other Forest Service employees do you most frequently interact with?
  - a. Can you show me their positions on an organization chart?
  - b. What sorts of work activities require you to work together with other Forest Service employees? Meetings? Travel?
7. As a Forest Service employee, whom do you interact with outside employment of the Forest Service, in the normal conduct of your job?
8. What is it like to be a woman in this organization?

**Goal II:** Gather more info about the U.S. Forest Service

9. Are there any recommended sources to help me learn or understand better how the Forest Service was started, works, and fits into the U.S. Government?

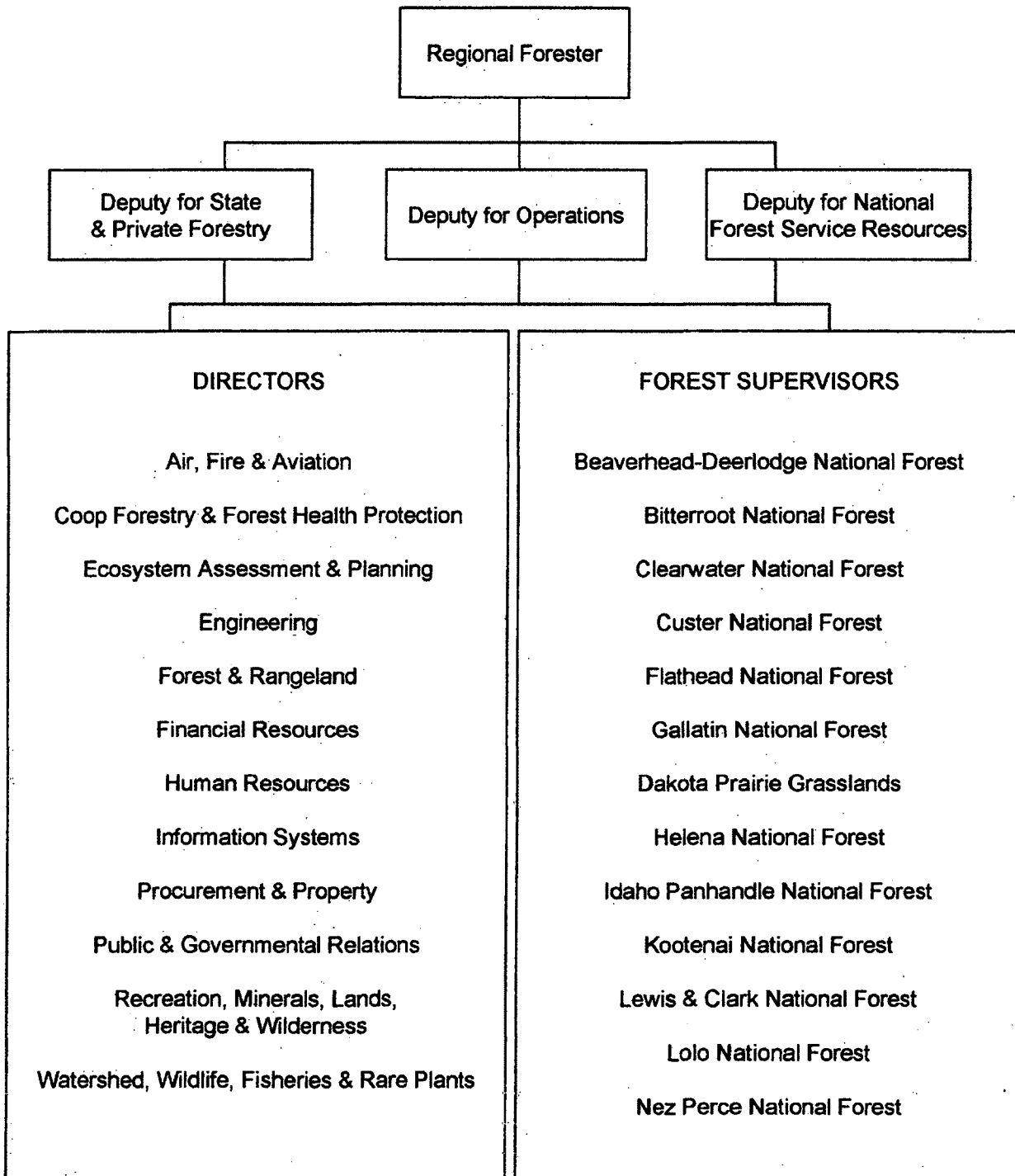
10. Are there any documents / books of how U.S. Forest Service is operated and managed?
- a. Past / New organization regulations
  - b. Historical records
  - c. Administrative policies
  - d. Employee handbooks
  - e. Brochures for the public
11. Is there any documentation that illustrates any structural, organization, or personnel changes over the last few years?

**GOAL IV: Closure**

12. Do you have any questions for me?

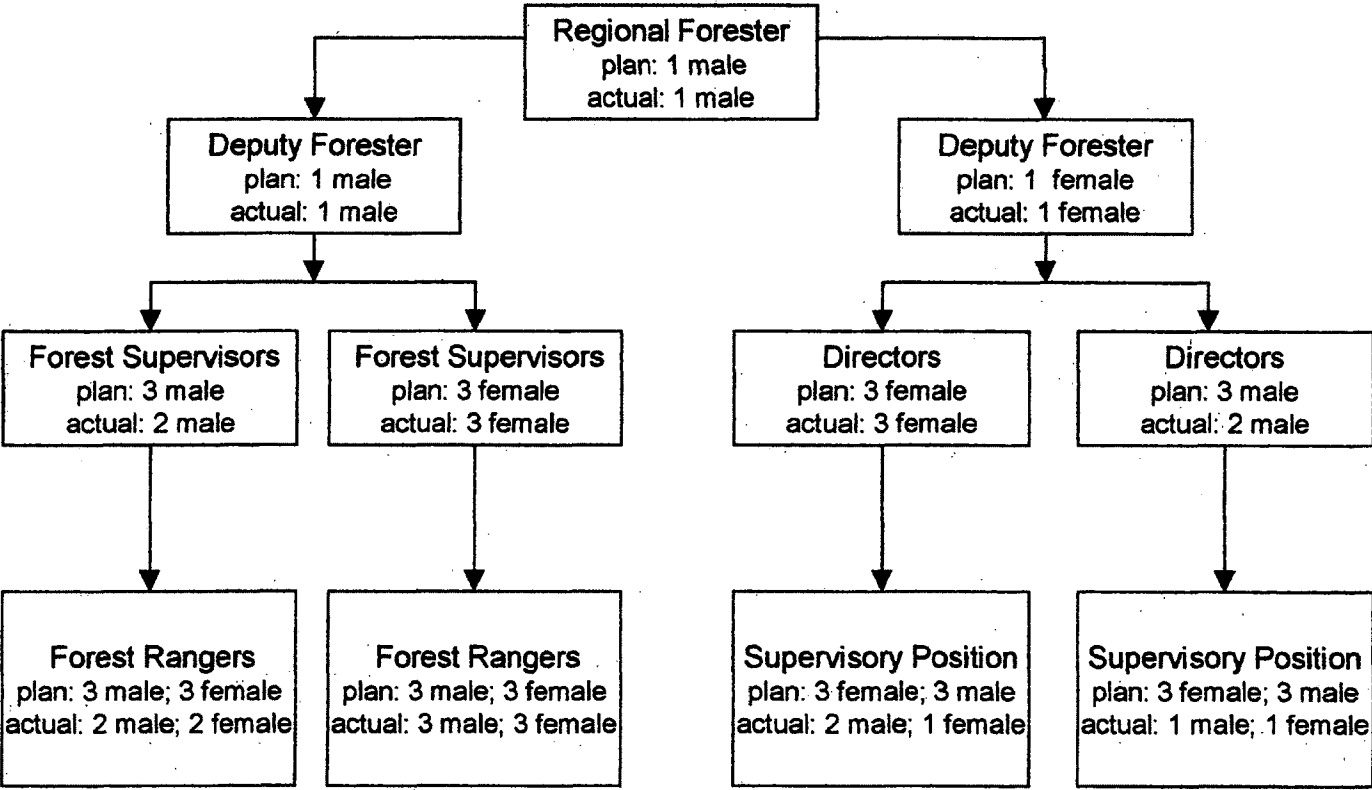
**APPENDIX C**

**U.S. Forest Service  
Region 1 Organizational Structure**



APPENDIX D

Interview Structure



## APPENDIX E

### Interview Guidelines

**ETHICS STATEMENT:** This study is for the purpose of exploring male and female leadership in the U.S. Forest Service. In order to study multiple views of leadership within this organization, I will be conducting interviews with a number of different people. The information will be analyzed in aggregate and the results of any one interview will be anonymous and confidential. All individual and corporate names will be deleted from the interview data. Thus, the information you give me will be both anonymous and confidential. This interview is being recorded and your participation in this study is voluntary. If at any time you would prefer to not answer a particular question, we can skip it. If at any time you would like to end the interview or stop the tape, we may. Do you understand the interview is recorded, anonymous, confidential, and voluntary?

If possible, please provide specific answers. A story that serves as an example of your experiences would be most helpful.

**GOAL I:** Current occupation & progression to this position

1. What is your position here?
  - a. Do you consider your location to be remote or central?
  - b. How does it affect your work? Your interactions?
2. What other positions have you held with the Forest Service?
3. How long did it take you to progress through each of these positions?
  - a. In what way has it (not) been a typical path of advancement?
  - b. Can you tell me some memorable experiences?
4. How much have you had to relocate to move through these positions?
5. Has there been any impact on your family that you have had to consider?
6. What are your primary responsibilities?
7. Have you encountered any conflicts or barriers while doing this job?
8. Have you ever had your authority challenged or threatened? Anyone ever buck your authority? What happened?
9. Can you tell me any stories that depict "the way it was"? "The way it is"? "The way things have changed?"

**GOAL II: Peer & Subordinate interaction**

10. What other Forest Service employees do you most frequently interact with?
  - a. Utilize Network Analysis Worksheet if necessary.
  - b. Tell me about a significant time (or the last time) that you interacted with one of these people.
11. Can you describe for me a good working relationship that you have with another employee?
  - a. Tell me about a significant time (or the last time) that you interacted with this person.
12. Can you describe for me a not-so-good working relationship that you have with another employee?
  - a. Tell me about a significant time (or the last time) that you interacted with this person?

**GOAL III: Leadership & Gender**

13. What is your philosophy of leadership?
  - a. To what extent is this view shared throughout the organization?
14. Can you articulate 5 principles that best encapsulate your leadership philosophies?
15. What is it like to (be a woman / work with women) in this organization?
  - a. How has this perception has changed over time?
16. Do you perceive a difference between male and female leadership styles in this org?
  - a. How so?
  - b. Can you give me an example that depicts why you perceive this?
17. Do you perceive acceptance of or rejection of differences in leadership styles, particularly the differences that may exist between a female and a male leader?
  - a. How so?
  - b. Can you give me an example that depicts why you perceive this?
18. What kinds of changes have you seen in the US Forest Service over the time you have been with them?
19. What are the key challenges to the future of the U.S. Forest Service?
  - a. Particularly in the realm of (female) leadership?

**GOAL IV: Closure**

**20. Do you have any questions for me?**

## APPENDIX F

### Network Analysis Worksheet

Considering all work-related persons with whom you interact on a regular basis (either face-to-face, via telephone, or via e-mail), list the 10 people with whom you have the most contact. Then use a recent week for answering the questions.

No.	Interactant's Name (or other form of ID)	Frequency of Interaction (Times per week)	Average length of Interaction (in minutes)	Nature of Interaction (e.g., topics of conversations; formal vs informal)	How satisfying was/were the interactions (on scale of 1-7)?*	How important to you is the relationship (on scale of 1-7)?*
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						

\* 1=low 7=high



## APPENDIX G

### Narrative Characters

#### THE INTERVIEWEE'S ROLE

n = number of stories  
depicting that element

#### Leadership Position

Supervisor / manager	(n=65)
Leader	(n=4)
Facilitator	(n=5)

#### Mentor and Mentee

Mentor	(n=3)
Mentee	(n=4)

#### Subordinate

Subordinate	(n=21)
General Employee position	(n=16)
General Worker	(n=1)

#### Gender Perspective

Female employee of the forest service	(n=27)
Male employee of the forest service	(n=1)

#### Self identified as part of the organization:

F.S. representative	(n=8)
Us, we as an agency	(n=11)
One amongst peers	(n=13)
Separate from org (me & them)	(n=3)
"Me, personally"	(n=2)
New forest service employee	(n=5)

#### Self identified by job function

Admin, contract decision maker 'on the forest'	(n=1)
New ranger	(n=1)
Trainee	(n=1)
Applicant to next job	(n=4)
Forester (general)	(n=1)
As member of team, group, crew, 'we'	(n=6)
Committee member	(n=1)

#### Function in relation to subordinates

Helper	(n=1)
Protects	(n=2)
Support	(n=2)

Self as part of a family	
Parent	(n=13)
spouse	(n=7)
As a member of family	(n=5)
Other:	
Friend	(n=1)
Reference self In 3 <sup>rd</sup> person	(n=4)
'Westerner'	(n=1)
Hierarchical relationship unclear	(n=1)

### OTHER CHARACTERS:

Subordinates	
Staff	(n=29)
Workers / employee	(n=7)
Leadership team	(n=1)
The forest	(n=1)
Ranger	(n=1)
Crew	(n=2)
Specialists	(n=4)
Administrative Assistant	(n=1)
Young professionals	(n=1)
Mentees	(n=1)
Friends	(n=2)
People with families, parents	(n=5)
'People'	(n=1)
Woman	(n=8)
Man	(n=2)
Counterparts	
Peers	(n=12)
The group	(n=2)
The staff	(n=4)
Crewmembers	(n=3)
Leadership team	(n=1)
Other rangers	(n=3)
Director & Forest Supervisor interaction	(n=5)
People on the forest	(n=2)
Friends	(n=1)
The inner circle	(n=1)
Adversary	(n=3)
Men	(n=7)
Women	(n=9)

<b>Superiors</b>	
Boss, supervisor	(n=17)
Ranger	(n=1)
Chief	(n=1)
Mentor	(n=7)
Woman	(n=1)
As fellow committee member	(n=1)
<b>The U.S. Forest Service</b>	
The Forest Service	(n=6)
The agency	(n=3)
This outfit	(n=3)
"They"	(n=5)
As a family	(n=1)
<b>Offices</b>	
The regional office	(n=3)
Washington, D.C.	(n=8)
Government	(n=5)
<b>Internals</b>	
Network, community, organization	(n=3)
Management	(n=3)
'They'	(n=2)
Hiring staff	(n=2)
Women	(n=6)
Man	(n=1)
<b>Reference to family members</b>	
Husband	(n=8)
Boyfriend	(n=1)
Wife	(n=4)
The kids	(n=9)
Immediate family	(n=3)
Extended family	(n=5)
<b>The Public</b>	
The public, community	(n=11)
Tribe	(n=1)
Ranchers / cowboys	(n=1)
Snowmobilers	(n=2)
Motorized users ignoring signs	(n=1)
Adamant environmentalist	(n=1)

**Externals**

Hard-boiled, private corporate foresters	(n=2)
Contractor	(n=2)
Con crews	(n=1)
Guys that run sales	(n=1)
Miners	(n=1)
Facilitator	(n=1)