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The evolution of a woman college president: Theodora J Kalikow

Leah Ewing Ross
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The evolution of a woman college president: Theodora J. Kalikow

by

Leah Ewing Ross

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee:
John H. Schuh, Major Professor
Larry H. Ebbers
Florence A. Hamrick
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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

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has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University

Signature was redacted for privacy.

Major Professor

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For the Major Program

DEDICATION

In memory of my mother, Elaine Ewing Ross, and my close friend and auntie, Alison Curling Hart. My heart has ached since your deaths, but you both continue to inspire me every day. You taught me that sadness is balanced by love and laughter and that I must keep my heart open to the gifts of the universe.

For my immediate family—Juan Ricardo Guardia, Hannah Ross Nulty, Chad Eric Nulty, David Stanley Ross, Anne Gwynne, Max Ross Guardia, Bleu Ross, Ridley Ross Nulty, Biner Gwynne, and KitKat Gwynne. Your love and laughter make me happy and your support is the foundation for my success. I love you very much.

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ABSTRACT

In order to combat the dearth of women at the helm of American colleges and universities, the experiences of the women who serve as college presidents need to be explored to inform the literature about women leaders. Despite the fact that there are numerous well-known women college presidents who serve as role models for aspiring leaders and from whose stories we can learn, the number of women college presidents in the United States is still very low. Furthermore, the women whose stories are known lead or have led well-known institutions that are frequently in the spotlight.

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the experiences of Theodora J. Kalikow, president of the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF). This study of a female president of a small, less well-known public college sheds light on an experience less told and highlights the work of a woman whose leadership has had a tremendous impact on the health and vitality of her campus. Under Theo's leadership, UMF has found its niche and has garnered the attention of higher education researchers interested in learning what makes campuses and students successful.

The significance of this autoethnographic study lies in the simple act of sharing a story. This is a story of leadership, challenges, and successes. The knowledge gained from this study—and the meaning made of the knowledge—will help higher education scholars, administrators, and stakeholders extend their understanding of what it takes to be a successful woman college president and what one woman has faced in that role.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is something magical about flying in an airplane, if one can separate the experience of moving through the sky from the hassles of travel. . . . My mind often wanders as I look at the continually changing landscapes below and the colorful, expansive sky surrounding me. . . . It was by chance that I found myself reading Jill Ker Conway's True North at a cruising altitude of 33,000 feet, traveling the length of the East Coast by jet. It proved to be a wonderful setting for me to immerse myself in Conway's memoir. I was able to spend several hours reading and thinking without distraction. At several points I found myself staring at the horizon, contemplating Conway's world through the airplane window. It was fittingly symbolic, as air travel literally and figuratively carried Conway through the journeys she describes in True North.

Ross, 1999, p. 1

If I close my eyes, I can relive the feelings I experienced on the airplane that day in March of 1999 as I flew from New Hampshire to Florida where I was enrolled in a master's program at Florida State University. I had spent my spring break at home with my parents and my Aunt Ellen, who was visiting from Ohio. My mother was in the midst of a chemotherapy protocol to treat her breast cancer, but we all enjoyed each others' company—laughing, telling stories, and cooking together, as always. There are wonderful photographs of that week: my mother, Ellen, family friend Jane, and I snowshoeing along the Merrimack River in the bitter cold; my mother and Ellen at the kitchen table; Ellen and I in red plaid flannel pajamas, scrubbing my parents' kitchen floor on our hands and knees.

The memories of the unremarkable activities of everyday life are the memories most deeply rooted in my heart. It is those seemingly mundane moments that have shaped my life the most, and as I traveled back to Florida at the end of that week, I was sad to leave my mom during her battle with cancer and was lonely without the camaraderie of daily life in my childhood home. Yet I took comfort in reading *True North* by Jill Ker Conway (1994). It

picked up where Conway's (1989) book, *Road from Coorain*, left off, which I had read and loved, and I was fascinated to learn about the life of the woman who became the first female president of Smith College, one of the premiere women's colleges in the United States. Conway's stories of challenge and success, love and loss, hope and fear validated my need to present the personal with the professional, to acknowledge the complexities of the human existence.

My interest in Jill Ker Conway's story was not new; I first read her work as an undergraduate English major and had been interested in the experiences of women college presidents for many years. As a student at Mount Holyoke College (MHC), I was fascinated with the life and work of the campus president, Elizabeth Kennan. President Kennan (or Liz, as everyone referred to her) is an alumna of MHC and was a vibrant life force on campus. She visited residence halls for Milk and Cookies (an evening tradition), walked her dogs every day on campus, and was frequently seen riding her horses at the equestrian center. As president, Liz was an excellent public speaker and a proud alumna, and seemed to genuinely love her job, which was evident through her commitment to the college and its students. After 17 years as the president of MHC, Liz left that role in 1995 as my class graduated. Members of the class of 1995 have a special bond with Liz as the last students to graduate under her tenure; "Liz's last class" is part of our class identity.

I did not know Elizabeth Kennan very well while a student at MHC, but her influence on me was remarkable. It is not easy to lead an institution of higher education, and a lot can be learned from the stories of leaders like Elizabeth Kennan and Jill Ker Conway. Yet many of the stories of college presidents highlight prominent leaders and prestigious institutions—

institutions like MHC and Smith, which are two of the Seven Sisters.¹ Most stories of college presidents highlight high-profile men; for example, see the writings of and about Clark Kerr of the University of California system (Kerr, 2003; Shapiro, 2005) and the writings of and about Theodore M. Hesburgh of the University of Notre Dame (Hesburgh & Reedy, 2000; O'Brien, 1998). Although such stories interest me, I have come to realize that there are numerous untold stories that are more representative of American colleges and universities. Most institutions in the United States are not prestigious, and the stories of their less-noticed, quieter leaders have a great deal to tell us about higher education. I have particular interest in the lives of the women who lead such colleges, particularly public colleges, because their stories seem to be hidden in an arena that receives little attention.

Problem

According to the American Council on Education (ACE; 2002), the percentage of college presidents in the United States who are women more than doubled between 1986 and 2001, from 9.5% to 21%. Also, ACE reported that as of 2001, 24% of newly hired presidents were women, which may foreshadow a continued increase in the number of women college presidents. These numbers are still low, however. In order to combat the dearth of women at the helm of American colleges and universities, the experiences of the women who serve as college presidents need to be explored to inform the literature about women leaders.

¹ The Seven Sisters are elite women's colleges in the Northeast that became a consortium in 1927 to "promote private women's colleges" (Barnard College, n.d.) and were also considered sisters to the all-male Ivy League colleges (Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, n.d.). The Seven Sisters are Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley. The colleges' histories and stories of their leaders are very well documented (e.g., Bordin, 1993; Cole, 1940; Horowitz, 1994; Patton, 1919).

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the experiences of Theodora J. Kalikow, the president of the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF). UMF is a public liberal arts college with an enrollment of 2,000 students (University of Maine at Farmington [UMF] Web site, n.d.) In its study of UMF, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project noted Theo's work as a transformational leader:

UMF is a campus where “people listen.” This atmosphere of trust, optimism, and support and space to innovate is due largely to the tone set by senior leaders, especially Dr. Theodora J. Kalikow. President since 1994, Theo (as she is known to everyone), has earned the trust of faculty, staff members, and community leaders because she is intelligent, puts people first, champions an inclusive decision-making approach, and is a tireless advocate of UMF's distinctive mission—being Maine's public liberal arts college. (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005, p. 140)

The goal of this study was to learn more about Theo's experiences—both personal and professional—within the framework of her role as a college president. Her narrative provides an opportunity to learn about leadership in general and women leaders in particular. I sought to gain insight about daily life on a public liberal arts college campus nestled in the mountainous landscape of western Maine that describes itself as “an open, active and engaged partner in the community” (UMF Web site, n.d.) This study will help members of the higher education community understand the stories of other leaders and campuses around the country, specifically women presidents at small public institutions, so that the condition

for women in academia can be improved with the hope that more women will attain top leadership positions in higher education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the relevant experiences of a longstanding and acclaimed successful woman college president?
2. What personal and professional experiences of Theodora J. Kalikow led to and are included in her role as a college president?

Rationale

Despite the fact that there are numerous well-known women college presidents who serve as role models for aspiring leaders and from whose stories we can learn, the number of women college presidents in the United States is still very low. Furthermore, the women whose stories are known lead or have led well-known institutions that are frequently in the spotlight (e.g., Johnetta B. Cole of Bennett College and formerly of Spelman College, Susan Hockfield of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Elizabeth Hoffman of the University of Colorado system, Ruth J. Simmons of Brown University, and Beverly Daniel Tatum of Spelman College and formerly of Mount Holyoke College). My study of a female president of a small, less well-known public college sheds light on an experience less told and highlights the work of a woman whose leadership has had a tremendous impact on the health and vitality of her campus. Under Theo's leadership, UMF has found its niche and has garnered the attention of higher education researchers interested in learning what makes campuses and students successful.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the simple act of sharing a story. This is a story of leadership, challenges, and successes. The knowledge gained from this study—and the meaning made of the knowledge—will help higher education scholars, administrators, and stakeholders extend their understanding of what it takes to be a successful woman college president and what one woman has faced in that role.

Theoretical Perspectives

Two theoretical perspectives guided this study: interpretivism and feminism. In addition, feminist critical policy analysis (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997) informed the study and transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006) served as content theory. Rather than looking at Theo through one of these lenses or all of them, I was most interested in where these theoretical perspectives intersect, and how that intersection is evident in Theo's personal and professional experiences. In addition to considering Theo as a transformational woman president, I acknowledged the perspectives presented by both of us as we worked together to share her story and as I shared my experiences of learning and communicating her story.

Interpretivism: Theoretical Perspective

In an interpretive qualitative study, the researcher seeks to understand how the participant makes meaning of situations, experiences, perspectives, or phenomena (Merriam, 2002b). “This meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive” (Merriam, 2002b, p. 6). Kristin G. Esterberg (2002) explained that interpretive approaches are similar to symbolic interactionism and highlighted its three premises:

The first is that humans act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them. . . . The second premise is that the meanings of things arise out of social interaction. . . . The third premise is that meanings are created (and changed) through a process of interpretation. (p. 15)

Interpretivism was appropriate for this study because I was interested in how Theo makes meaning of her experiences in general (personal and professional) and of her role as a college president specifically. In sharing Theo's story, I paid due attention to the meanings "things" have for her, the social interaction from which those meanings stem, the way in which she interprets those meanings, and the way in which I interpreted her story. However, it is impossible to fully portray another person's story, for one person can never know for certain what another person is truly feeling and experiencing. As a result, interpretivism is limited in its ability to share the true story of a person's life. Esterberg (2002) described this complexity:

Interpretive writing is akin to fiction, in that it is fashioned from a researcher's interpretation, or best guess, of what is going on. But it is not wholly fiction because it is rooted in social actors' actual lives; it is not simply made up. (p. 16)

To this end, I shared my interpretations of Theo's story to the best of my abilities, acknowledging the limitations inherent in this approach.

Feminism: Theoretical Perspective

This study, by its very nature, demanded use of a feminist perspective because it was the study of a woman and the meaning she attributes to her experiences. It lent itself nicely to the framework for studying women's lives provided by Carolyn G. Heilbrun in *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988). Heilbrun began her book with a discussion of feminist ideology, which

she described as “another word for trying to understand, in the life of a woman, in the life of the mind, which is, as Nancy Miller has noted, ‘not coldly cerebral but impassioned’” (p. 16). This study of Theo attempted to understand her life as a woman with due attention to the life of her mind.

Esterberg (2002) explained that feminist social science research encompasses a wide range of approaches and techniques:

Although some feminist scholars may take a more liberal approach and others a more radical one, what they share is a sense that social science as traditionally conducted does not fully take into account the presence of women in social life and the range of women’s concerns. (p. 18)

What feminist scholars have in common is an urgency to make women the focus of research and challenge the theories and methodologies traditionally used in academic research.

Feminist Critical Policy Analysis: A Source of Guidance

As noted earlier, few stories of women college presidents have been shared, especially when compared to the literature available about male college presidents. Most studies of women academics have employed gender as a point of comparison rather than as a conceptual and analytical lens and have therefore failed in their attempts to put women’s stories front and center (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). Estela Mara Bensimon and Catherine Marshall argued that women-centered policy analysis is needed to understand women academics’ stories and to initiate change in the institutions that continue to ignore gender.

Feminist critical policy analysis as applied by Bensimon and Marshall (1997) to the academic setting was appropriate for this study of a woman college president given the nature of her job as the leader of an academic institution. Furthermore,

consistent with the feminist project of restructuring the disciplines to include the missing voices of the Other(s), critical feminist analysts consciously incorporate into their studies gender as well as race, class, sexual orientation or other signifiers that are implicated in the construction of identities. (p. 6)

The goals of feminist critical analysis are:

1) to critique or deconstruct conventional theories and explanations and reveal the gender biases (as well as racial, sexual, social class biases) inherent in commonly accepted theories, constructs, methodologies and concepts; and 2) to conduct analysis that is feminist both in its theoretical and methodological orientations. (Bensimon & Marshall, p. 6)

A study that employs feminist critical policy analysis requires utilization of five components (in addition to the inclusion of women):

1. *It poses gender as a fundamental category . . .* [so that] the researcher is more alert to the various ways in which gender structures experiences, relationships, processes, practices and outcomes. (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997, p. 9)
2. *It is concerned with the analysis of differences, local context, specificity* (such as gender and race), and historicity (Barrett & Phillips, 1992). Feminist analysts assert that, in order for women to have a subject status that is equal to men's, women's differences must be recognized (Irigaray, 1993) rather than suppressed. This is in direct contradistinction with the assumption that gender blindness is a prerequisite for achieving equality between men and women. (Bensimon & Marshall, pp. 9-10)

3. *The data of feminist theory is the lived experience of women. . . .* The goal of the investigation is to answer questions and provide explanations about phenomena that women want and need rather than to answer the questions framed by men or by male controlled institutions. Further, the gender, race, class, and culture biases of the inquirer are assumed to be a part of the research and are subject to the same critical inquiry. (Bensimon & Marshall, p. 10)
4. *The goal is to transform institutions.* Feminist analysis questions the purpose of the academy's structures, practices and values in order to do away with or reform those that disadvantage women and others. (Bensimon & Marshall, p. 10)
5. *It is an interventionist strategy.* The aim of feminist critical scholarship is to dismantle systems of power and replace them with more preferable ones (Pateman, 1986). Thus, unlike conventional policy analysis where there is a pretension to neutrality and objectivity, feminist policy analysis is openly political and change-oriented. (Bensimon & Marshall, p. 10)

Feminist critical policy analysis was particularly appropriate for this study of a woman college president because it requires the woman's story to be at the forefront—to be the data. Furthermore, my interest in conducting this type of study was to help fill the void of information about women college presidents' experiences. At its core, this study is “openly political and change-oriented” (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997, p. 10); I provide one piece of a puzzle that, once assembled, portrays a truthful picture of the experiences of women college presidents.

Transformational Leadership: Content Theory

The concept of transformational leadership was introduced by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and grew out of his work on transactional leadership. Bernard M. Bass and colleagues used Burns' work to expand the notion of transformational leadership (e.g. Bass, 1985, 1998; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Unlike transactional leaders, whose work is characterized by some type of exchange, transformational leaders

stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization. (Bass & Riggio, p. 3)

Transformational leaders are charismatic, and in the literature, transformational leadership and charismatic leadership often are linked. There are four key aspects of transformational leadership, the first one of which speaks to charisma, and originally was labeled charisma (see Bass, 1985):

1. *Idealized Influence*. Transformational leaders behave in ways that allow them to serve as role models for their followers. The leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them; leaders are endowed by their followers as having extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination. Thus, there are two aspects of idealized influence: the leader's behaviors and the elements that are attributed to the leader by the followers and other associates. . . . Leaders who have a great deal of idealized influence are willing to take risks and are consistent rather than arbitrary. They can be counted

on to do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct. (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6)

2. *Inspirational Motivation.* Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work. . . . Leaders get followers involved in envisioning attractive future states; they create clearly communicated expectations that followers want to meet and also demonstrate commitment to goals and the shared vision. (Bass & Riggio, p. 6)
3. *Intellectual Stimulation.* Transformational leaders stimulate their followers' efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Creativity is encouraged. There is no public criticism of individual members' mistakes. (Bass & Riggio, p. 7)
4. *Individualized Consideration.* Transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower's needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. Followers and colleagues are developed to successively higher levels of potential The leader's behavior demonstrates acceptance of individual differences. (Bass & Riggio, p. 7)

In addition to the four components described above, transformational leadership must be socialized rather than personalized, which are concepts borrowed from charismatic leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). "The defining issue is whether the leader works primarily toward personal gains [personalized leadership] as opposed to focusing also on the outcomes for followers [socialized leadership]" (p. 13). The focus of socialized leaders' work is beyond

their own benefit, whereas personalized leaders put their own goals and needs at the forefront. Most leaders have both socialized and personalized qualities and their identities as such are a “matter of degree” (p. 13).

Personalized transformational leaders are not truly transformational; Bass and Riggio (2006) labeled them “pseudotransformational” or “inauthentic” (p. 13) and contrasted such leaders to “authentic transformational leaders, who transcend their own self-interests for one of two reasons: utilitarian or moral” (p. 14). Transformational leaders with utilitarian purposes strive “to benefit their group or its individual members, their organization, or society, as well as themselves, and to meet the challenges of the task or mission” (p. 14). On the other hand, transformational leaders with moral purposes attempt to “do the right thing, to do what fits principles of morality, responsibility, sense of discipline, and respect for authority, customs, rules, and traditions of a society” (p. 14).

All aspects of transformational leadership can be examined for authenticity, but Bass and Riggio (2006) explained that attention to the individualized consideration component is the best way to determine authenticity. “The authentic transformational leader is truly concerned with the desires and needs of followers and cares about their individual development” (p. 14). These distinctions help to differentiate transformational leadership from charismatic leadership in its negative sense. Charismatic leadership is often associated with powerful leaders who use their charisma to achieve their ends, whether positive or negative (Bass & Riggio).

Examining Theo’s story as one of transformational leadership highlights her success in transforming UMF as noted by George D. Kuh, Jillian Kinzie, John H. Schuh, Elizabeth J. Whitt, & Associates (2005) in the DEEP study. Furthermore, this study explores the theme of

transformation (broadly construed) in all aspects of Theo's story including, but not limited, to her current role.

The Intersection of Theoretical Perspectives

Use of interpretivism and feminism provided the foundation for this study, and use of feminist critical policy analysis and transformational leadership provided a necessary balance to the theoretical perspectives. The concept of transformational leadership was created by a man (James MacGregor Burns) in the late 1970s and was further developed by another man (Bernard M. Bass). Use of transformational leadership alone would not have allowed me to fulfill the purpose of this study because it is grounded in male-generated perspectives. Intentional, specific attention was paid to Theo as a woman in order to truly understand her journey, her experiences, and her perspectives. The feminist perspective, with support of feminist critical policy analysis, allowed me to consider her as a transformational woman college president and to put her stories—personal and professional—center stage.

Figure 1 demonstrates the way in which I envisioned the intersection between the theoretical and personal perspectives that informed this study. Theo offered her story as the participant in the study, and the study was shaped by my subjectivities and perspectives as the researcher. The interlocking pieces of a puzzle seem most appropriate to illustrate this study because although the segments shared here touch each other, they are part of a larger picture, full of components that intersect and interact with each other in different ways, under a variety of conditions, and are susceptible to continual movement and changes of direction.

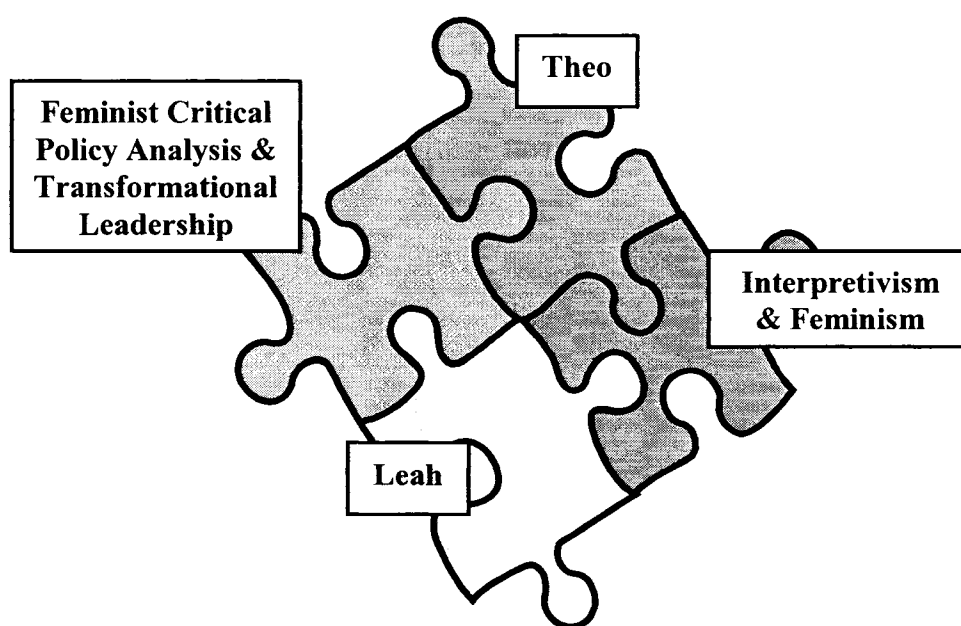


Figure 1. Intersection of theoretical and personal perspectives.

Reflections on Tentative Presuppositions

At the start of this study I tentatively presupposed that Theo would not “take credit” for the success UMF has experienced during her tenure, which proved to be true. Theo attributed UMF’s success to the work of the campus community as a team. I also assumed that Theo would highlight any challenges and opportunities that were a result of the fact that she is a woman, and she did offer such reflections. Finally, I predicted that the theme of transformation (broadly construed) would arise in this study because Theo has helped to transform UMF from a relatively unknown campus to a vibrant liberal arts community (Kuh et al., 2005); Theo transformed herself as an academician from a focus on chemistry, in which she received her bachelor’s degree, to philosophy, in which she received her master’s and doctoral degrees, to a top-level academic administrator; I knew that I would be transformed as the result of learning Theo’s story; and I expected that the theme of

transformation would bubble to the top in other ways. Transformation did prove to be an important theme in this study and I used it to frame the findings section of this paper (chapter 4).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acting to confront society's expectations for oneself requires either the mad daring of youth, or the colder determination of middle age. Men tend to move on a fairly predictable path to achievement; women transform themselves only after an awakening. And that awakening is identifiable only in hindsight.

Heilbrun, 1988, p. 118

In 2001 the median age of college presidents was 58, 87.2% were White, and 76.4% had Ph.D.s or Ed.D.s. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2005, p. 25). Theo Kalikow is not in the minority among college presidents in terms of age, race, and degree attainment, but she is one of few women at the helm of American colleges. As of 2001, only 21% of college presidents in the United States were women (ACE, 2002; *Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. 25). Theo is in the minority in other respects as well: Only 5.1% of college presidents as of 2001 were Jewish and 0.5% had domestic partners (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. 25). Despite awareness of who college presidents are (and are not), little is known about women college presidents and presidents who lead small, public colleges.

This chapter offers a review of the literature related to the topic of this dissertation. My intent is to demonstrate how this study finds a home in the existing literature (Esterberg, 2002). More specifically, I highlight a gap in the research that can be filled, at least in part, by this study (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) and how it provides a foundation for similar studies conducted in the future. This literature review informs this study by providing information about and critiquing the leadership of women college presidents, women transformational leaders, college presidents as transformational leaders, and women college presidents as transformational leaders.

As noted in chapter 1, the concept of transformational leadership was introduced by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and developed by Bernard M. Bass (e.g., 1985, 1996, 1997, 1998) and Bass and his colleagues (e.g., Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass & Steidlmeier, 2004). Bass and his colleagues have written prolifically on the topic of transformational leadership, as have other scholars (e.g., Anderson & Anderson, 2001; House & Shamir, 1993; Keeley, 2004; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). There is also a great deal of literature on the leadership of college presidents (e.g., Levin, 1998; Neumann & Bensimon, 1990). Yet little has been written specifically about the leadership of women college presidents in their own right, without comparing them to men (e.g., Wolverton, Bower, & Maldonado, 2005).

The dearth of information about women college presidents has been noted for at least 20 years. For example, in his book *The Community College Presidency*, George B. Vaughan (1986) recognized that his study did not pay specific attention to gender. He acknowledged the study's limitation in that regard and urged future scholars to research the experiences of women presidents. Vaughn's work focused on community colleges, but the call for attention to women in the presidency applies to all types of institutions. Catherine A. Tisinger noted in 1991 that the history of women in public higher education has yet to be recorded in its entirety. And more recently, Mimi Wolverton et al. (2005) noted that little is known about women college presidents despite the growing amounts of literature available about leaders and leadership.

Conducted with an interpretive feminist lens, this study placed Theo's story at the forefront in the fashion of Mary Catherine Bateson's *Composing a Life* (1989) and Carolyn G. Heilbrun's *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988). The leadership frame used in this study was

transformational leadership. As noted in chapter 1, Theo was described as a transformational leader by George D. Kuh et al., (2005) in their work with Project DEEP.

Women College Presidents and Leadership

One of the difficulties in reviewing the knowledge base on leadership is that there are many approaches to studying leadership, and different scholars focus on different aspects of leadership and on leadership in different settings.

Public Colleges

Women have a long history of leading public colleges and universities in the United States, though their stories are not well-known and their numbers remained incredibly small for over 100 years. Julia Sears became the first woman president of a public college when she was selected to lead Mankato Normal School in Minnesota in 1872 (Tisinger, 1991). Other early leaders of public colleges included Rita Bolt of Lyndon Normal School in Vermont (1927-1955), Kate Galt Zaneis of Oklahoma State Teachers College (1935-1937), and Ruth Haas of Danbury State Teachers College in Connecticut (1946-1975) (Tisinger). Yet these women's stories, and the stories of other such women, are rarely highlighted, perhaps because they assumed roles that were almost exclusively held by men and did not represent the norm in higher education administration.

In an attempt to fill the gap of knowledge about women who lead public colleges and universities, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities published a book entitled *Women at the Helm: Pathfinding Presidents at State Colleges and Universities*, edited by Judith A. Sturnick, Jane E. Milley, and Catherine A. Tisinger (1991). *Women at the Helm* tells the stories of women who have served in the role of public college president with specific attention to different types of experiences within the job (e.g., fundraising,

governmental relations, the second presidency, etc.). One topic included in the book highlights the experiences of women presidents who lead public colleges in rural settings. This information is particularly relevant to this study given UMF's location in rural, northern New England.

Rural Settings

Janet Gorman Murphy's (1991) chapter about women presidents in rural settings highlights the role that geography plays in a president's experience and her leadership. A president's campus duties are not necessarily different in a rural setting (versus an urban or suburban environment), but her role in town-gown relations is influenced by the fact that everyone in the community knows her. A president of a college in a more populated area may choose to enjoy a certain level of anonymity in her off-campus life, whereas one cannot be anonymous in a small town (Murphy). The benefit, however, is that there are opportunities to provide significant leadership at local and regional levels. In fact, the rural college president "is expected to participate meaningfully in a variety of community activities, to play a strong leadership role in community organizations, and to be visible everywhere in the community" (Murphy, p. 56).

Despite its necessity, high levels of involvement with the community can be challenging when competing local interests place the president and her institution in politically tense situations. As president of North Adams State College in northwestern Massachusetts, Catherine A. Tisinger engaged in a number of projects in the community, including one assigned to her by the governor, and found that her campus benefited as a result. However, there were times in which she had to "avoid being caught in the crossfires of

local community politics in order not to jeopardize the college's standing" (Murphy, 1991, p. 56).

In a rural environment, it is not easy for a college president to walk the blurred line between acting in the college's best interest while serving as a leader in the community. In addition to the challenges of local politics, an entire town has expectations of the president. As president of UMF in the 1980s, Judith A. Sturnick found it difficult to balance her time between service to UMF and service to the town of Farmington, both of which were more than full-time jobs. She found that her role required "almost superhuman endurance, patience, and fortitude" (Murphy, 1991, p. 56). The role of a rural college president is likely no more or less intense than the role of presidents in more populated areas—it is simply different.

Garnering community support is crucial for the rural college president. As president of Lyndon State College in Vermont's remote Northeast Kingdom, Murphy (1991) worked hard to build a strong relationship between the campus and the community. She succeeded in doing so through a variety of efforts, from small acts of graciousness (e.g., offering her home to local organizations for meetings) to building large-scale alliances (e.g., gaining the support of state legislators in and out of her district). Success of this nature is not automatic for any president. Although it is not necessarily easy for men to gain community support, many rural colleges are located in areas in which women do not realize the same career opportunities as men.

The issue of fit may be particularly salient for presidents of rural colleges because there is little privacy and it is not easy to escape from campus to rejuvenate oneself. Although Judith A. Sturnick enjoyed working for rural campuses in northern New England,

she felt isolated in the remoteness of Farmington, Maine. Sturnick welcomed a move from UMF to Keene State College in southwestern New Hampshire, which is also a rural campus. The Keene State campus is small, but not as small as UMF, and the town of Keene is larger than Farmington and is in closer proximity to large cities and airports. Sturnick reflected that the move “made a tremendous difference in the quality of my life, in my ability to maintain contact with essential networks of friends and colleagues, and even my ability to make easier travel arrangements” (Murphy, 1991, p. 53).

A feminist study of a woman college president must pay due attention to quality of life factors in order to achieve a holistic approach. Emotional issues, many of which contribute to quality of life factors, cannot be ignored or minimized. Sturnick had to leave UMF to improve her quality of life despite her commitment to institutions of higher education in rural areas. Theo has thrived in Farmington, however: “This is my twelfth year as president of the University of Maine at Farmington. I think UMF is a wonderful place and I plan to stay put!” (UMF Web site, n.d.) Theo’s enthusiasm for the region jumps off of the Web site, especially in the description of her hobbies: “reading (science fiction, mysteries, novels), rowing (when the lake isn’t frozen), cross-country skiing and snowshoeing (when there’s snow), gardening and hiking. I also do triathlons” (UMF Web site).

The experiences unique to leading a public college in a rural setting as highlighted by Murphy (1991) informed my study of Theo. It was important to consider her roles on and off campus in light of UMF’s location. The community in which a college is located is its entrée into and frontline contact with the “outside world” and the president is the official representative of that relationship.

Effective Leadership

Mimi Wolverton, Beverly L. Bower, and Cecilia Maldonado (2005) provided the preliminary findings of an ongoing study of women in leadership, of which college presidents are one part. Their goal was to “challenge conventional wisdom about gender-based differences in leadership” (p. 2) because they recognized a gap in the literature about women leaders. Yet despite its limitations, they turned to that literature to create a platform for their study:

Two threads ran through the articles, books, and research. One, in sum, this body of knowledge is disjointed with one author or researcher investigating and writing about a particular aspect of effective leadership and another about something completely different but equally important and crucial to leadership. And two, much of this literature is written by men about men, particularly white men. (p. 3)

In order to capture the qualities of effective leadership in a useable way for their study, Wolverton et al. distilled the characteristics presented in the literature into nine tenets of leadership (listed below), recognizing that the characteristics are grounded in the predominantly male perspective.

The five college presidents selected for the Wolverton et al. (2005) study represented community colleges and four-year colleges and universities and had already been identified as effective leaders. The researchers wanted to determine which of the nine tenets of leadership the presidents found most important:

1. Effective leaders are passionate about their organizations.
2. Effective leaders are reflective.
3. Effective leaders are competent.

4. Effective leaders are great communicators.
5. Effective leaders understand the role that culture plays in shaping the way they lead.
6. Effective leaders possess the physical and emotional stamina, energy, and resilience needed to persevere in the long run.
7. Effective leaders are focused yet forward thinking.
8. Effective leaders respect and value individuality.
9. Effective leaders possess credibility. (p. 6)

The data gathered to date indicate that competence, credibility, and communication are the most important tenets for women college presidents; they also highlighted passion and forward thinking as key characteristics. It will be interesting to explore Theo's impressions of herself as a leader and to discover whether she mentions any of these tenets as keys to her success.

Although Wolverton et al. (2005) are still gathering data for their longitudinal study and plan to interview more women college presidents, their findings are of interest. Women college presidents see opportunities for other women interested in the college presidency on the horizon, but recognize that the position poses serious challenges for individuals and institutions. For example, talented individuals can take their skills outside of higher education to the fields that pay higher salaries. Also, the issue of balancing the personal and professional is tremendous and cannot be minimized. One respondent stated that "the presidency is all consuming. You must make a conscious decision to pursue it in lieu of something else—something has to give" (p. 9). This made me wonder what life decisions

Theo made during her long tenure at UMF and whether she feels she has given up certain things to pursue her position.

Despite the challenges pulling people away from the top leadership positions in higher education, there are women who aspire to the presidency. The presidents interviewed by Wolverton et al. (2005) provided recommendations for women to prepare themselves to be good leaders. They agreed that participation in faculty culture and knowledge of budgeting and fundraising are critical. Also, women must learn how to take care of themselves physically and emotionally in order to avoid burnout. All of this contributes to competency and the ability to demonstrate it: “The presidents in our study indicated women in their positions are scrutinized carefully and criticized freely and must continually demonstrate their competence for the positions they hold” (p. 10). Theo shares her hobbies on the UMF Web site, emphasizing the value of taking care of oneself. Perhaps her personal interests have contributed to her success and longevity in her position.

Women were (and continue to be) the focus of the Wolverton et al. (2005) study, and the stories of their participants inform the knowledge base of women in leadership. Despite the fact that the nine tenets of leadership used in the study stem from literature primarily representing men’s experiences, the researchers discovered that the tenets resonate with women. Therefore, they asserted that the training for women leaders should be similar to that of men. Yet they acknowledged that “women are still shaped by societal expectations and influences [and] we may still have work to do in certain areas” (p. 10).

Revisiting and Reexamining Voices of Leadership

Perhaps one way to begin the work of understanding the implications of societal expectations and influences on women to which Wolverton et al. (2005) referred is to listen

to the voices of women leaders that we may not have truly heard before. In order to place gender at the focal point of a study of college presidents and leadership, Estela Mara Bensimon (1989) revisited an earlier examination of two college presidents' definitions of leadership to reinterpret them from a feminist standpoint. The original study found that the presidents' perspectives on leadership were very similar. Yet Bensimon chose to revisit her work because she realized that in not paying due attention to the role of gender in the presidents' experiences (one female and one male), she made the assumption that women and men "experience leadership in the same way" (p. 144). Furthermore, she found that by placing other characteristics at the center of the study, such as Carnegie institutional type and the number of years presidents had served in their positions, she "reinforced the idea of leadership as a phenomenon that is shaped by objective and independent variables" (p. 148).

The findings of Bensimon's (1989) re-examination study highlight the striking differences in interpretations of leadership when gender is the focus of a study. For example, what she identified as collegial perspectives of leadership in her original study were reinterpreted as differentiation on the part of the male president and holism on the part of the female president. The man's definition of leadership in Bensimon's study focused on the positional and structural, which seemed to separate leadership and the leader. In contrast, the woman's definition of leadership focused on individuals' beliefs and values.

Other findings in Bensimon's (1989) study included reinterpreting political skills as the accrual of power through separation (male) or through connection (female), and viewing the role of a leader as a central figure who creates visions and motivates others (male) or as a cheerleader who helps others achieve their goals while also helping the institution achieve its goals (female). Viewing leadership through a feminist lens, Bensimon found that the man

focused his ideas about leadership on himself as a leader and as “an agent of organizational transformation” (p. 153). The woman, on the other hand, focused her ideas about leadership on integration of individuals and organizations and was “open to the possibility of being transformed by [the institution]” (p. 153).

Bensimon (1989) concluded her reinterpretation project by critiquing the way she conducted her original study and discussing the implications of failing to place gender at the center of the study:

To rigidly superimpose these particular organizational models (or any other leadership constructs) on the experience of women is to deprive them of their own story (Heilbrun, 1988). It also serves to perpetuate an incomplete understanding of administrative leadership in higher education. (p. 153)

The original study’s use of specific leadership concepts to interpret college presidents’ experiences failed to recognize the female president’s experiences. In the original analysis, the woman president’s communication about connectedness was “misread as a manifestation of collegial, political, and symbolic awareness” (p. 154), whereas use of a feminist lens discovered that “connectedness is much more fundamental: It shapes the very identity of the leader” (p. 154). Bensimon’s findings support use of the feminist lens in this examination of Theo and her leadership. Placing Theo’s gender at the forefront will protect this study from the flaws of Bensimon’s original project.

Women Transformational Leaders

In her study of women arts educators and transformational leadership, Rita L. Irwin (1995) could not locate research on women transformational leaders to inform her project. Instead, she assembled pieces of different studies to create a foundation for her work. As part

of her process, Irwin discovered the dangers of examining a woman's story through traditional leadership lenses without attention to gender. Applying models of male leadership to women's stories can result in what Irwin called "faulty connections" (p. 17), which lead to the misinterpretation of women's stories as Bensimon (1989) discovered in her reinterpretation study.

Lack of attention to women as transformational leaders fits with the long-standing public perception that women are less qualified than men to be leaders (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996). In their review of leadership studies that compared women and men, Bass et al. were able to locate only two articles that involved transformational leadership. In one study, Roman Catholic nuns were identified by the people they supervise as more likely to be transformational leaders than men. In addition, a study of managers found that women were more likely to use power in a transformational manner than men (e.g., women used power to build resources and men used it to control others). To expand these findings, Bass et al. embarked on an exploration of how men's and women's leadership styles are perceived by others. One line of investigation in the study was transformational leadership.

Bass et al. (1996) offered the hypothesis that "female leaders will be rated by their direct reports as displaying transformational leadership more frequently than will their male counterparts" (p. 12). This hypothesis and others relating to different types of leadership were tested using questionnaire data from three samples; participants were asked to rate their leaders' behaviors. The first data set assessed mid- and upper-level managers from six Fortune 50 firms. The second sample assessed first-level supervisors randomly selected for the study. The third sample assessed leaders from a variety of industries (health care, social services, government, and small business). In using three different samples, Bass et al. hoped

to determine whether or not their findings could be generalized more widely than previous research on this topic.

The general patterns of all three samples of the Bass et al. (1996) study confirmed the hypothesis that women are more likely than men to be identified as transformational leaders by raters; this was true of both male and female raters. The authors suggested several reasons for the findings. For example, women are more likely than men to be nurturing and interested in the development of others, use power to build relationships, and demonstrate caring. However, Bass et al. cautioned that survey data do not capture actual behaviors; rather, they highlight *perceptions* of leaders' behaviors, "which are subject to potential biases and inaccuracies in a rater's judgement [sic]" (p. 29). The authors stopped short of proclaiming that women are definitely more likely than men to be transformational leaders and instead offered the reflection that women are at least as transformational as men and that they may indeed be more transformational. This fits with Project DEEP's identification of Theo as a transformational leader (Kuh et al., 2005).

Scholars who research transformational leadership have paid little attention to gender in their analyses. However, there is growing evidence that women are more likely to develop the traits of transformational leadership than men (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This may be related to some of the characteristics identified in women, such as a focus on building relationships, developing individuals, and caring, among other traits. These traits may be identified by women about themselves, or by others, and they may be real or perceptual. Regardless, this is not to say that women are better transformational leaders than men, or that men are not truly transformational leaders. Rather, there is a need to explore the transformational leadership of

women to inform future studies. This study of Theo contributes to the knowledge base in this area.

College Presidents as Transformational Leaders

Yoram Neumann and Edith F. Neumann (2000) explored the connection between college presidents' strategic leadership styles and the success of their institutions. They described strategic leadership as an outgrowth of transformational leadership with specific attention to "the process of bringing about significant changes in the organization by emphasizing three distinct strategic leadership skills" (p. 98): visioning, focusing, and implementing. Neumann and Neumann analyzed and combined these three skills and developed eight different strategic leadership types with which they studied 158 presidents' leadership styles. The leadership styles were considered in light of indicators of the institutions' success (or lack thereof) over five years: enrollment, resources, and quality of academic programs. Particular attention was paid to the growth and/or decline of enrollment and resources and minimal attention was paid to the quality of academic programs.

The findings of Neumann and Neumann's (2000) study indicated that "presidents' strategic leadership style is associated with the college bottom line" (p. 107). The presidents' different combinations of visioning, focusing, and implementing represent a wide spectrum of leadership styles; those styles were analyzed in light of the institutions' performance in terms of enrollment and resources. Highlights of Neumann and Neumann's findings include:

- Presidents with low ratings on visioning, focusing, and implementing [called "maintainers"] were most likely to be associated with negative institutional outcomes—a decline in either enrollment or resources.

- Presidents with high ratings on visioning, focusing, and implementing [“integrators”] and those with high ratings on two of the three skills [“net casters”] led colleges with positive institution outcomes—an increase in either enrollment or resources.
- Integrators were the only type of leaders associated with the most successful institutions—those with increases in both enrollment and resources.

This study highlights the fact that over time presidential leadership influences an institution and indicators of its health. The fact that Neumann and Neumann studied 158 presidents negates the chance that all of their findings were coincidental—that institutions’ successes or declines in quality indicators were completely unaffected by the leadership traits of their presidents.

Neumann and Neumann’s (2000) study gathered self-reported data through use of a survey. Certainly self-assessment is subjective, but that does not minimize its value. Like the Neumann and Neumann study, my examination of Theo’s story rests on interpretations she provides about her professional and personal experiences and her leadership behavior. A great deal can be learned from college presidents and the ways in which they describe their abilities and weaknesses.

Women College Presidents as Transformational Leaders

As noted in chapter 1, there is a dearth of women college presidents in the United States. However, the number of women community college presidents is increasing, due in part to the retirement of current presidents, both male and female (Stout-Stewart, 2005). Although there is not a lot of information available about women transformational leaders in general, two studies of women community college presidents as transformational leaders

were located. One study compared male and female transformational college presidents, and the other study focused solely on women.

Comparison by Gender

As part of a study on the leadership of community college presidents, John E. Roueche, George A. Baker, III, and Robert R. Rose (1989) explored differences between men and women. All of the presidents in their study were identified as transformational leaders; therefore, they focused on the presidents' behavioral strengths and whether those strengths were predominantly masculine or feminine. Using quantitative data collected through questionnaires, Roueche et al. identified five key behavior variables of transformational community college presidents: vision, influence, motivation, people, and values. They examined the details of four variables in order to determine if there were statistically significant differences when gender is used as an independent variable. Motivation was not included because initial exploration of the variable did not result in any differences between men and women. Findings were illuminated with quotations from both male and female community college presidents.

Vision

Seven attributes of vision were considered: future orientation, shaping of future, taking risks, taking action, articulating mission, sharing vision, and accessing students. The only attribute with a statistically significant difference between men and women was taking risks—women were more willing than men to take risks. Roueche et al. (1989) highlighted the difference in this discovery from the findings of earlier research, which noted that women were unlikely to take risks. The authors attributed this change to the fact that women had to take risks in their jobs because they were leading institutions fraught with challenges.

Influence

Leaders' influence orientation was separated into nine attributes: delegating authority, acting positively, tasking and consideration, sharing decision-making, allowing others [sic] influence, acting collaboratively, listening and networking, being highly visible, and being highly energetic. Analyses resulted in two statistically significant differences in this variable: women were more likely than men to act collaboratively, and men were more likely than women to act positively which is "characterized by a bias for action" (Roueche et al., 1989, p. 249).

People

Six attributes of leaders' orientations to people were highlighted: recognizing culture, rewarding others, caring/respecting others, meeting needs, valuing students, and valuing others. The two significant differences were that men were more likely than women to reward others, and women were more likely than men to care/respect others. Roueche et al. (1989) related the findings about women to human development:

When one reviews the literature in women's studies, both Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) use the concept [of caring] as the basis of their studies of women in the fields of both moral development and education. . . . It is Gilligan's contention that "the different voice" that women contribute to [Kohlberg's] theory of moral development is that of caring. Noddings (1984) . . . argues that the mother's experience of caring and everyone's remembrance of being cared for constitute the basis of ethics. In her view, the ethic of caring gives joy to human existence: it is the recognition of and longing for relatedness that form the foundation of the ethic of care. (pp. 250-251)

This connection to human development suggests that caring and respecting others, as part of women's development, cannot be separated from their leadership behaviors. It is interesting to note that this rationale was introduced only for this variable. I argue that human development relates to all behaviors, including leadership, because leadership is part of the human experience; it is informed by life experiences and affects and influences interpersonal relationships.

Values

Seven attributes of values were examined: developing intellectually, valuing others' development, valuing integrity, valuing consistency, building openness and trust, employing humor, and leading by example. The only attribute with statistical significance by gender was building openness and trust, which was stronger for women. Roueche et al. (1989) did not offer an explanation of the finding, but provided related quotations from woman presidents. One stated: "I try to treat people the way I value being treated. I'm forthright with people and as honest and fair as I can possibly be" (p. 254).

Analysis of Gender Differences

Roueche et al. (1989) concluded that overall, using gender as an independent variable in their study of leadership behaviors did not result in any differences "critical to effective leadership" (p. 254). Despite the differences between men and women on a few attributes of the components of leadership, their mean scores on the five variables (motivation included) were very similar. As a result, the authors claimed that effective leadership is not influenced by gender.

Effective leadership, therefore, is a concept relating to attributes of presidents of community colleges without reference to their sex. The strengths of both the women

and the men of the study are parallel strengths and contribute to their identity as transformational leaders. (p. 255)

This study does not attempt to challenge Roueche et al.'s assertions, but it places Theo's story at the forefront so that it can be highlighted without the burden of gender comparison.

Leaders and Followers

Roueche et al.'s (1989) study was extended to determine if there are gender differences in the leader–follower relationship; leaders and followers completed questionnaires about this relationship. Overall, no differences were found in the components of leadership based on presidents' sex. Furthermore, nearly 85% of followers viewed their presidents the same way that the presidents viewed themselves. This supported Roueche et al.'s initial finding that the characteristics of transformational leadership are not dependent on or affected by gender. However, in light of their other findings, it would be interesting to know if both men and women view themselves as having “followers,” or if women, in particular, would choose different terminology given their treatment of power as a tool to build relationships rather than to control people (Bensimon, 1989).

Leadership as Holistic

In their final analysis, Roueche et al. (1989) confirmed that women can be transformational leaders. Although some male or female qualities may lend themselves to specific dimensions of leadership, the authors insisted that leadership be viewed holistically rather than separated by gender. Although it would be inappropriate to view male and female leaders in a better than/worse than framework, Roueche et al.'s conclusions seem overly simplistic. As a team of three men using a positivist lens, it is difficult to understand how the nature of gender in transformational leadership could have been fully explored.

Roueche et al. (1989) applied a framework built for men to a comparison study of men and women. In doing so, any experiences, definitions, and understandings developed by women were not recognized and were likely misinterpreted, as Irwin (1995) later warned. Furthermore, using quotations simply bolstered their findings and did not offer different perspectives. They examined women's comments to illuminate their findings rather than to identify whether women interpreted the variables in their study and experienced the components of leadership differently. This is not to say Roueche et al.'s findings somehow are false or lack value. However, it highlights the need to study these concepts from a feminist perspective, placing women at the center so that their experiences as leaders are not examined solely in comparison to men's experiences or with frameworks built for men. This study of Theo addresses that need.

A Focus on Women

One study of women community college presidents placed women at the center, however. In light of the projected continued growth of women in community college presidencies, Sherry Stout-Stewart (2005) set out to explore and understand the leadership behaviors of women community college presidents. She also "investigated the correlations between leadership practices and behaviors of female community-college presidents and such factors as the race/ethnicity of the presidents; education, experience, and the institution's enrollment" (p. 305). Kouzes and Posner's (2003, as cited in Stout-Stewart, 2005) criteria for exemplary leadership and their Leadership Practices Inventory were used to assess 126 female college presidents' leadership abilities:

Modeling the Way (set the example and plan small wins), Inspiring a Shared Vision (envision the future and enlist others), Challenging the Process (search for

opportunities and experiment and take risks), Enabling Others to Act (foster collaboration and strengthen others), and Encouraging the Heart (recognize contributions and celebrate accomplishments). (p. 305)

Stout-Stewart also considered the presidents' races/ethnicities and education levels, as well as institutional enrollment levels and geographic locations, to determine if they impacted presidential leadership behavior.

Most of Stout-Stewart's (2005) participants were White and worked for community colleges in rural and suburban areas. Her findings included:

- Participants ranked their leadership behaviors in the following order: Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, Encouraging the Heart, Challenging the Process, and Inspiring a Shared Vision.
- When considering race/ethnicity, presidents who identified as "other" had higher ratings for Inspiring a Shared Vision and Encouraging the Heart than White or African American presidents. Also, African American presidents had higher ratings for both of these criteria than White presidents.
- Presidents with doctoral degrees rated higher in leadership patterns than presidents without doctoral degrees.
- Overall enrollment levels did not have a significant impact on the presidents' leadership patterns.
- Geographic location did not have a significant impact on the presidents' leadership patterns related to the five criteria.

Although Stout-Stewart (2005) focused on women in this study and did not compare them to men, she did not analyze the data with a feminist lens. Also, she grounded the study

in a leadership theory (transformational leadership) that was created and developed by men (Burns, 1978, and Bass, 1985, respectively). As a result, her findings are not enlightened by information about how the women presidents' leadership behaviors were influenced by the traditional male environments in which they work and did not recognize the variables' influence on gender (e.g., the role of gender in different races/ethnicities). Stout-Stewart's study serves as a reminder about how important it was for my study to utilize the feminist perspective so that due attention was paid to Theo as a woman.

Summary

Literature on the leadership of women college presidents, the transformational leadership of women, the transformational leadership of college presidents, and the transformational leadership of women college presidents informed this study of Theo's experiences. Together, the studies highlighted in this chapter emphasize the need to recognize women's experiences on their own and to resist comparing them to men's experiences or fit them into molds designed for men. Use of a feminist perspective places Theo's story center stage. In turn, Theo's story will inform the literature about women transformational leaders, women college presidents, and women college presidents who are transformational leaders, improving the limited knowledge base in these areas.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The process of improvisation that goes into composing a life is compounded in the process of remembering a life, like a patchwork quilt in a watercolor painting, ruffled and evocative. Yet it is this second process, composing a life through memory as well as through day-to-day choices, that seems to me most essential to creative living. The past empowers the present, and the groping footsteps leading to this present mark the pathways to the future.

Bateson, 1989, p. 34

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Theodora J. Kalikow, the president of the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF). The goal of this study was to highlight Theo's experiences in order to learn about leadership in general and women leaders in particular. The research questions were:

1. What are the relevant experiences of a longstanding and acclaimed successful woman college president?
2. What personal and professional experiences of Theodora J. Kalikow led to and include her role as a college president?

These questions were best answered by a qualitative study. Sharan B. Merriam (2002b) explained:

Qualitative research attempts to understand and make sense of phenomena from the participant's perspective . . . [and] is characterized by the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and a richly descriptive end product. (p.

6)

Qualitative work using the theoretical perspectives of interpretivism and feminism allowed me to explore Theo's experiences and the meaning of those experiences from her

perspective. The autoethnographic methodology presumed the incorporation of my relevant experiences and perspectives as well. However, Theo's experience as a woman college president was front and center, informing all aspects of the study.

Philosophical Assumptions

The epistemology of constructionism rejects the notion of objective truth and allows attention to be paid to the different ways in which people construct meaning (Crotty, 1998). Further, it is assumed that "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). This study focused on Theo's experiences; therefore it was crucial that she (as participant) and I (as researcher) "emerge as partners in the generation of meaning" (Crotty, p. 9).

Use of interpretivism and feminism as the theoretical perspectives supported constructionism. Interpretivism was used in seeking to understand Theo's experiences and the meanings she constructs from them. Feminism was used to assure that the data collected centered on Theo's story (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). Furthermore, constructivist researchers "recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they 'position themselves' in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (Creswell, 2003, pp. 8-9). This supports feminist critical policy analysis in that "the gender, race, class, and culture biases of the inquirer are assumed to be a part of the research and are subject to the same critical inquiry" (Bensimon & Marshall, p. 10).

Methodological Approach

In order to achieve my purpose of placing Theo's story front and center in this study, I selected a methodology that complemented the objectives set forth by my theoretical

perspectives. Autoethnography allowed me to pay due attention to Theo's story while also sharing myself, my biases, and my perspectives in an up-front manner, thereby matching the parameters of interpretivism and feminism. Furthermore, Theo's story informed readers through autoethnography in an attempt to address the gap in the literature about the experiences of women college presidents, particularly those who lead non-prestigious institutions. There is great value in sharing such stories and in their potential to transform others' perceptions and understanding:

It's important to get exposed to local stories that bring us into worlds of experience that are unknown to us, show us the concrete daily details of people whose lives have been underrepresented or not represented at all, help us reduce their marginalization, show us how partial and situated our understanding of the world is . . . it's enlightening and possibly transforming. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 748)

Autoethnography, like feminist research, encompasses a wide variety of perspectives and approaches to research. It grew out of the traditions of ethnography and life history (Reed-Danahay, 1997), and scholars have employed this methodology in a wide variety of ways:

Autoethnography stands at the intersection of three genres of writing which are becoming increasingly visible: (1) "native anthropology," in which people who were formerly the subjects of ethnography become the authors of studies of their own group; (2) "ethnic autobiography," personal narratives written by members of ethnic minority groups; and (3) "autobiographical ethnography," in which anthropologists interject personal experience into ethnographic writing. (p. 2)

Researchers' approaches to autoethnography differ in the amounts of emphasis they place on self (auto), culture (ethno), and the research process (graphy) (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Reed-Danahay). Some autoethnographic projects present only the researcher's story. Others share the researcher's story as part of the topic, phenomenon, or group of people studied. The amount of the researcher's story shared in these studies varies a great deal. There is no set format for autoethnography, making it a unique methodology that has yet to become mainstream.

My approach to autoethnography in this study placed Theo and her story at the center, with secondary attention to myself and my perceptions. The definition of autoethnography offered by Norman K. Denzin (1989) guided this project:

An auto-ethnography is an ethnographic statement which writes the ethnographer into the text in an autobiographical manner (Crapanzano, 1980). This is an important variant in the traditional ethnographic account which positions the writer as an objective outsider in the texts that are written about the culture, group, or person in question (Geertz, 1988; Clifford & Marcus, 1986). A fully grounded biographical study would be auto-ethnographic and contain elements of the writer's own biography and personal history (Denzin, 1987a & 1987b). Such an auto-ethnography would be descriptive and interpretive (Denzin, 1989a). (p. 34)

This study of Theo was biographical in nature, and in addition to presenting her story, I shared pieces of my story as they related to learning and interpreting her story.

The reflexive component of autoethnography matches the goals of feminist research: Many feminist writers have advocated starting research from one's own experience (e.g. Smith, 1979). Thus, to a greater or lesser extent, researchers incorporate their

personal experiences and standpoints in their research by starting with a story about themselves, explaining their personal connection to the project, or by using personal knowledge to help them in the research process. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, pp. 740-741)

I started chapter 1 with a small piece of my story and explained my interest in this study and continued to weave my story through this project because it informed my knowledge and analysis during the research process. My reflexivity will help readers understand how I interpreted Theo's story (Merriam, 2002a).

This study resembles biography with fragments of my autobiography woven through it. Mary Catherine Bateson's (1989) book *Composing a Life* served as a model for this study. Bateson explored the lives of five women (four friends and herself) and referred to her book as "the outcome of a process of conversation and reflection" (p. 16). It is the weaving of the women's autobiographies that makes Bateson's book unique. She represented the women in their own words, yet with a layer of analysis about her own life. The book is incredibly powerful and has the ability to change the way that people think about a variety of topics, including women's professional and personal roles, the balance (or lack thereof) in their lives, the relationship between work and intimacy, and notions of vulnerability.

The way in which Bateson (1989) offered her own story and reflection, shared the stories of her friends, and wove it all together is very moving. She spoke of women as models for other women, and articulated her awareness of when and how she was a poor model. Bateson framed the book with numerous questions, and summarized them with the comment that "the knight errant, who finds his challenges along the way, may be a better model for our times than the knight who is questing for the Grail" (p. 10). This insight gives

scholars the permission to make mistakes, to learn along the way, and to reflect on such experiences. I look forward to rising to her challenge in my study.

Participant

I identified my participant, Theodora J. Kalikow, through the NSSE Project DEEP. Project DEEP used NSSE data to identify baccalaureate-granting institutions that have high rates of graduation and student engagement and highlighted 20 institutions that have realized this type of success, including UMF (Kuh et al., 2005)². UMF is a public college that is less concerned with prestige, and more focused on how it “serves a statewide mission as Maine’s public liberal arts college” (UMF Web site, n.d.)

Theo was of interest to me because she represents a story yet untold from which the higher education community can learn a great deal. I also identified two other potential participants for my study through Project DEEP: Diana Natalicio, the president of the University of Texas at El Paso, and Sister Joel Reed, former president of Alverno College. However, I approached Theo first because like me, Theo is a New Englander, and UMF is in northern New England, a few hours away from where I was raised. I thought that it would be interesting to return to my home region for this study. Also, as a graduate of Mount Holyoke I am familiar with private liberal arts education and was interested to learn about a public liberal arts institution.

² The 20 DEEP schools are Alverno College, California State University at Monterey Bay, Evergreen State College, Fayetteville State University, George Mason University, Gonzaga University, Longwood University, Macalester College, Miami University, Sewanee – University of the South, Sweet Briar College, University of Kansas, University of Maine at Farmington, University of Michigan, University of Texas at El Paso, Ursinus College, Wabash College, Wheaton College (MA), Winston-Salem State University, and Wofford College (Kuh et al., 2005).

Access

The issue of access played a key role in identification of my participant. As a college president, Theo is considered an elite due to her prominent status and influential role (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), and gaining access to elites is frequently a challenge. “Few social researchers study elites because elites are by their very nature difficult to penetrate. Elites establish barriers that set their members apart from the rest of society” (Hertz & Imber, 1993, p. 3). This is certainly true of a college president, particularly because she has a demanding job that consumes much of her life 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. Yet even if Theo’s role makes her an elite, she does not seem to see herself as an elite. Her page on the UMF Web site (n.d.) contains photos of her in casual clothes, describes her hobbies, and invites students to make lunch dates with her.

Despite her approachability, Theo is a very busy woman in a demanding job and I knew that access to her may be limited as a result. Use of networks is one way to access elites. In this case, my major professor, John H. Schuh, provided the access I needed as he was part of the Project DEEP team that visited UMF. In the letter that I sent to Theo in November 2005 to solicit her participation in my study (see Appendix A), I highlighted how I learned of her and her work. I explained my study and its purpose and noted that I would follow up with her later in the month. A few days after she received the letter, Theo e-mailed me to say that she was happy to participate in my study and to set up a time to call her (see Appendix B). I spoke with Theo on November 29, 2005 and shared additional details of my study; she confirmed her willingness to participate and agreed that this study would be most effective if it were *not* anonymous. Therefore, her identity and that of UMF are clearly indicated, allowing the full context of the study to be revealed.

Theo's willingness—and eagerness—to participate in my study demonstrated that I had what Thomas (1993) regarded as a “compelling reason” to gain access to an elite:

Recognizable affiliations and personal contacts can only be qualifiers. They are not likely to open doors unless accompanied by a compelling reason as to why someone should see you [the researcher]. In that regard, it is essential to have a problem or question lead the way—something that suggests that the person with whom you want to speak is uniquely qualified in some way. (p. 86)

It seemed that Theo was enticed to participate in my study because she could see how her contributions would aid in answering my research questions and furthering my research agenda. She expressed support for my study and stated that my plan made sense and was logical (T. J. Kalikow, personal communication, November 29, 2005).

Data Collection Procedures

I made two week-long visits to the UMF campus in early 2006, spent time with Theo, and immersed myself in her environment. I employed three primary data collection procedures in this study: interviews, observation, and document analysis. These procedures allowed me to gain the information needed to portray Theo's story and also provided opportunities for triangulation, discussed further in the design issues section of this chapter.

Interviews

My interview questions for Theo were pilot tested in early January 2006 with two female campus administrators at Iowa State University: Mary Gregoire, then-chair of the Department of Apparel, Educational Studies and Hospitality Management; and Dianne Bystrom, director of the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics. I revised the questions based on the suggestions offered by Mary and Dianne (see Appendix C for

interview protocol). At UMF I engaged in eight in-depth (semi-structured) interviews with Theo; each interview was audio recorded and lasted approximately 90 minutes. I also interviewed eight of Theo's colleagues (see Appendix D for interview protocol) and two UMF students, and spent time with Theo's partner, Deb, on and off campus. Those interviews and conversations informed the study by providing information about the contexts in which Theo lives and works, but were not used as validation measures; Theo's story is the centerpiece of the study, and the purpose of my work was not to label her story as "right" or "wrong."

In-depth interviewing fit nicely with the interpretivist perspective of this study because it allowed me to focus on how Theo constructs meaning:

Typically, qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses. (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 80)

In addition, this type of interviewing was appropriate for a feminist study in light of the "commitment, as a feminist scholar, to allowing women to describe their experiences in their own terms, to developing more egalitarian relationships with interviewees, and to encouraging interviewees to introduce new research questions based on their own lived experiences" (Taylor, 1998, p. 366).

I used Irving Seidman's (2006) three-interview series as a general structure for my interviews with Theo:

1. Interview One: Focused Life History—In the first interview, the interviewer’s task is to put the participant’s experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time. (p. 17)
2. Interview Two: The Details of Experience—The purpose of the second interview is to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants’ present lived experience in the topic area of the study. We ask them to reconstruct these details. (p. 18)
3. Interview Three: Reflection on the Meaning—In the third interview, we ask participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience. The question of ‘meaning’ is not one of satisfaction or reward, although such issues may play a part in the participants’ thinking. Rather, it addresses the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants’ work and life. (p. 18)

In general, I moved through the first and second stages of the interview series during my first visit to UMF and through the third stage during my second visit to UMF. However, the experience of interviewing Theo was more fluid and less structured, and I sought meaning-making throughout the process and did not view it as an end-goal of the interviews. For example, when Theo discussed an important life event, I asked her to interpret its meaning in her current life situation rather than wait days or weeks to revisit the topic and investigate meaning-making, as prescribed in Seidman’s (2006) interview protocol. Also, as Theo and I became more familiar with each other during our time together, she seemed more willing to reflect on the meaning of her experiences and I was more comfortable asking her to do so.

As discussed earlier, Theo is an elite given the nature of her role as a college president. The issue of access to her, as an elite, was discussed in the participant selection section of this chapter. However, other themes are relevant in a study of an elite: interview preparation, power dynamics between interviewee and interviewer, challenges in gathering data, and the danger of deference.

Interview Preparation

Valuable preparation strategies can be learned from researchers who interview elites, particularly political elites. These interviewers are required to be very efficient given that time with political elites is usually minimal. Robert L. Peabody et al. (1990) insisted that a researcher should not “ask questions to which [he or she] should know the answers. . . . Do your homework before the interview and go into the meeting prepared with as much background information as possible” (p. 452). This applies to longer interviews as well; all interviewers should strive for efficiency. It is a waste of time for a researcher to leave an interview without data or without useful data. Although I spent two weeks on the UMF campus, I wanted my time with Theo to be as efficient as possible. My preparation included learning as much as possible about her so that I could ask her to reflect on her experiences and make meaning of them rather than simply verbalize her résumé.

In her study of Nobel laureates in science, Harriet Zuckerman (1972) found that extensive preparation served her well during interviews. In particular, her familiarity with the laureates’ work helped shape the course of her conversations with them. Zuckerman reflected:

Intensive preparation facilitated the process of interviewing in two principal ways.

First, it gave evidence of the seriousness of the interviewer and helped to legitimize

expenditure of time on the interview. . . . Second, questions based on materials gathered in preparation often called forth responses that would otherwise not have been elicited, particularly if an entirely standardized interview guide had been employed. (pp. 164-165)

Elites are usually engaged in numerous important projects and are unlikely to spend time on something they deem trivial (Zuckerman).

Preparation for interviews with elites is crucial because elites challenge interviewers to prove their proficiency:

[The laureates'] commitment to the intellectually profitable use of their time led them to subject the interviewer to an almost continuous series of tests to ascertain the degree of her competence and commitment. It was here that preparation for the interviews was especially important since the results of these tests affected both the laureates' willingness to continue and the quality of their responses. (Zuckerman, 1972, p. 165)

Any interviewee would be frustrated if an interviewer appeared unfocused or ill prepared. However, one must question whether or not the "testing" of Zuckerman's preparation by the laureates was also an issue of gender. It is likely that most, if not all, of the laureates Zuckerman interviewed were men. (All of the laureates she commented on were men.) Zuckerman collected her data in the late 1960s and did not reflect on gender issues in her article.

Catherine Welch, Rebecca Marschan-Piekkari, Heli Penttinen, and Marja Tahvanainen (2002) likened issues of gender to issues of seniority; gender and seniority gaps between interviewers and interviewees represent a double-edged sword. "The impact of the

seniority gap . . . is an ambivalent one: on the one hand, researchers may be patronised [sic] and their comments overridden; on the other hand, elite individuals may take the time to inform and ‘enlighten’ their junior interlocutor” (p. 621). Although Theo and I are both women, I knew that the seniority gap could impact this study, especially since I asked a woman more than 30 years older than I to reflect on her life from a vantage point I have yet to reach. I was sensitive to this issue in my interactions with Theo and respected that her perspective is informed by her age and life experiences.

Power Dynamics

Challenges related to power dynamics are likely to surface in any research project. In studies of non-elites, power tends to rest with the interviewer. However, in a study of an elite, “the power balance is likely to favour [sic] the informant over the researcher” (Welch et al., 2002, p. 615). Robert J. Thomas (1993) explained that when interviewing an elite, “there is the issue of control—specifically, who is in charge of the interview” (p. 89). Elites are used to being in control, and most are unlikely to give up control in an interview. Furthermore, elites frequently talk in public, and many of them use interviewers’ questions to describe their own agendas or to simply offer prepared, official responses. However, there are a variety of tactics researchers can employ to minimize power differentials and to obtain the information they are seeking. Thomas suggested use of semi-structured interview questions, instead of unstructured questions, in order to minimize the chances of a respondent launching into a speech or offering public relations-type answers. I used semi-structured questions in my interview protocol with Theo, but I quickly learned that she is not the type of leader who offers canned responses. Rather, she offered genuine responses to my questions and did not hesitate to share her true opinions.

Susan A. Ostrander (1993) found that use of nonverbal cues at the beginning of interview sessions were effective in making it clear to interviewees that she was in control of their time together, “even if the elite subject [was] momentarily set off balance” (p. 19). For example, when interviewing an elite at an upscale restaurant at which the elite had breakfast every day, Ostrander arrived early and was sitting at the elite’s table when he walked in. As a result, Ostrander was able to guide the interview even though it took place on the elite’s turf. My interviews with Theo took place in her office on the UMF campus, but Theo did not act as though she was in control of the agenda, and she was sensitive to my goals. For example, Theo started our first session with the request, “Tell me your plan for us this week,” and our second session by saying, “You’ve got questions, or impressions, or, it’s your time, do what you want.”

Welch et al. (2002) determined that framing the researcher role as that of an informed outsider was useful in handling issues of control with elites. They also found that it was effective “to encourage elite interviewees to regard the interview as an intellectual discussion” (p. 625). This was not difficult in this study of Theo as a woman college president because she had insights to share, was interested in learning from the experience, and is very much vested in the future of women in the field of academia.

A side effect of interviews framed as intellectual conversations is that “elites like to use the interviewer, who is up-to-date in the academic literature which they themselves often have little time to read, as a facilitator of their own thinking and a sounding board for ideas” (Welch et al., 2002, p. 625). Theo and I engaged in conversation about different types of literature, but she did not need me to offer reviews of recent works. She is very well-read and stays abreast of the literature in a variety of fields, including leadership. Yet overall, elites are

likely to help make interviews a success. As Zuckerman (1972) explained, “members of the top elite are motivated to succeed in the role of interviewee as in other roles and are likely to perform at high levels of competence” (p. 175).

Ostrander (1993) offered another valuable suggestion for defining time with an interviewee as work and not an opportunity to socialize:

I stumbled onto the technique of using the placement of my tape recorder as an excuse to make the decision about where in the room we would sit. Arriving at the women’s homes with clipboard and tape recorder in hand conveyed the message that I was there to work and expected the same of my subjects. I also learned after a few mistakes not to behave like a guest because being a guest set the wrong tone and led us into “socializing.” (p. 20)

Most researchers agree that some casual conversation is required in order to gain rapport with respondents, but the danger in not minimizing such interaction is that once elites begin to talk, it is difficult to control the direction of the conversation. However, feminist researchers believe that the type of relationships that grow out of interviewer–interviewee interaction is necessary in feminist studies. Although I was conscious of the balance between work time and relationship-building in my sessions with Theo, I spent time building rapport with her during my first visit to UMF. Furthermore, I realized that my study (as I envisioned it) would not be successful if I compartmentalized our conversations into categories such as “personal” and “work.” The data I gathered in this study are so rich because they truly reflect Theo’s story as she shared it with me, and our interactions included a wide variety of topics that naturally surface in comfortable conversation.

By its nature, a study utilizing the feminist perspective attempts to minimize power dynamics. “Feminist theory researchers question the utility, morality, and truthfulness of drawing distinct, impermeable lines between researcher and respondent” (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 442). Use of a feminist perspective when interviewing elites may minimize the figurative dance of power described in many studies. Feminist research brings issues of power to the forefront right away. The onus is on the researcher to level the playing field for participants and to not assume a role defined by power and control. “Feminists advocate research techniques designed to break down the false separation and hierarchy between the researcher and the researched” (Taylor, 1998, p. 370). Yet in studies in which the *interviewee* assumes control or wields power, the interviewer must work hard to level the playing field for herself. It is a different challenge to deconstruct hierarchies for one’s own experience than having the responsibility to do so for others. Still, I felt no need to do so in my interactions with Theo because she does not approach the world from the perspective that she, as a college president, has power and others do not. As a result, my time with Theo was very fruitful because I was not distracted by having to navigate stifling dynamics based on hierarchy.

Challenges in Gathering Data

A key part of a researcher’s preparation for an interview with an elite is to be clear about what she hopes to learn. “It is important to be clear about which personae you want to interview: the individual, the position, or the organization. . . . In the absence of clarity, the third is likely to be chosen as the default option by the interviewee” (Thomas, 1993, p. 86). An elite is the official representative of her organization, and unless the interviewer makes a clear attempt to define the context of the interview, the interviewee may assume the role of

spokesperson. In a study of a woman college president's experiences, the spokesperson persona is unlikely to provide the type of rich data the researcher seeks. In order to gather the data I needed to accomplish the goals of this study, I shared with Theo the purpose and rationale of the study as outlined in chapter 1. As a result, I was able to fulfill my goal of learning about Theo as an individual and not simply about her as president of UMF.

Elites often exert control in interviews as a way to avoid answering difficult questions or sharing sensitive information. They are frequently guarded because of "fears that their comments may be used against them [and that] concerns about anonymity may be very real" (Welch et al., 2002, p. 621). As a result, gaining access to an elite does not necessarily mean that the researcher will be able to gather valuable information. Ostrander (1993) designed a plan to address this problem:

I have developed three strategies for asking hard questions that elites might perceive as threatening. The first is learning their language so I can ask in terms they find more acceptable and will understand. The second is explicitly stretching the bounds of etiquette and defining the interview situation as different from daily social intercourse. The third is basing difficult questions on particular situations and events known to me from independent sources that I could use to query or challenge elites' knowledge or point of view. (p. 23)

Although these tactics may work, the ways in which they are employed depend on the researcher's comfort level and the nature of the environment in which the study is conducted. However, I did not need to use such approaches during my time with Theo because she shared information freely and did not hesitate to discuss sensitive issues.

Welch et al. (2002) suggested that “the researcher can encourage openness on the part of informants by steering a course between therapist and spy; in other words, stressing academic neutrality while showing empathy towards the interviewee” (p. 625). This may be a valuable approach, assuming that empathy is appropriate. Zuckerman (1972) found that she gained more information from respondents by “phrasing questions or comments in rather extreme form [which] usually elicited their qualified elaborations” (p. 171). For example, in her study of laureates, she found that they would not settle for imprecise versions of what they were trying to communicate. By summarizing the laureates’ comments and reading the summaries out loud to them, Zuckerman was able to elicit more detailed responses. I was able to gather detailed information from Theo simply by asking her.

Dangers of Deference

Despite the success researchers realize in gaining access to elites and obtaining valuable data from them, there is danger of deference. Many researchers are so relieved about gaining access to elites and are so eager to establish rapport with them that they are unwilling to jeopardize their opportunities by addressing issues of power and control. Others are vulnerable to their awe of elites, leading them to believe what elites tell them without careful analysis or critical review. Ostrander (1993) explained this phenomenon:

[Elites] are used to being asked what they think and having what they think matter in other people’s lives. These social facts can result in the researcher being too deferential and overly concerned about establishing positive rapport. They can also result in the researcher overestimating the importance of what elites have to say, assuming, for example, that they necessarily know more and better what is going on in an organization. (p. 19)

These challenges are the researcher's problem, and a researcher must learn how to recognize these traits in herself in order to avoid situations in which deference compromises the integrity of a study. I was conscious of such behavior on my part in interactions with Theo, especially as I reviewed interview transcripts and prepared for each meeting with her.

Several researchers have struggled with feelings of intimidation or inadequacy while interviewing elites. Ostrander (1993) wrote that for her intimidation was coupled by confusion "from a simultaneous sense of being put in one's place by elites at the same time that they are being warm, friendly, open, and communicative" (p. 19). Thomas (1993) spoke of how it is easy to be "drawn in" by the articulateness and charm of elites. He offered ways to handle such "halo effects": "[I] recall in my mind people whom I came to respect as a result of what I learned from them, not as a result of their press clippings, their formal titles, or their oratorical skills" (p. 85).

It is important to note that feelings of intimidation or inadequacy are not unique to studies of elites. Rather, such feelings are related to the researcher's sense of self and are common in situations in which power and control are at play or could be at play. For example, while collecting data for her dissertation, Leslie R. Bloom (1998) engaged in a series of interviews with a professor. Bloom reflected that she had "the usual anxieties of a first meeting and fears of a novice researcher. . . . Because Olivia was a professor who was familiar with feminist methodology, I also had fears of being found incompetent in her eyes" (p. 16). And as Ostrander (1993) noted, a study of elites presents a unique risk in addition to intimidation—the chance of "offending powerful people" (p. 15). I, too, had such anxieties and used my mentors and support network to help me keep such feelings in perspective so that they did not overwhelm my process of gathering data.

Observation

Observation of Theo in her work environment and of the UMF campus was used in tandem with interviewing. “Observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study. . . . Through observation, the researcher learns about behaviors and the meanings attached to those behaviors” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 79). My observations included accompanying Theo to meetings with president’s council, individual colleagues, off-campus visitors, and the system chancellor and his staff. I attended a meeting of Theo, the provost, and the UMF faculty to address faculty members’ concerns about the transition to a new curriculum model. I went to the deans’ dinner for high-achieving first-year students, sat in the audience when the system chancellor addressed the campus community, and participated in a series of events in the Moose Country Mardi Gras series to raise money for Hurricane Katrina relief and a local charity. During my unscheduled time, I walked all over the UMF campus, observed activity in the student center, explored the library, and talked with local merchants in downtown Farmington. I also enjoyed an afternoon of cross-country skiing with Theo and her partner, Deb. Observation of Theo in so many of her daily activities allowed me to gain a sense of her duties and informed my understanding of how she makes meaning of her experiences.

Document Analysis

Document analysis was used to supplement interviews and observation in this study and included Theo’s speeches, writings, and UMF Web site pages. Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman (1995) explained that “the use of documents often entails a specialized approach called *content analysis*. Best thought of as an overall approach, a method, *and* an

analytic strategy, content analysis entails the systematic examination of forms of communication to document patterns objectively” (p. 85). Although I do not believe that any analysis is completely objective, document analysis provided another pane in the window through which I viewed Theo’s story.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis in this study does not line up with the parameters set forth in traditional qualitative work. Autoethnography highlights personal narrative and simply does not lend itself to common data analysis procedures, such as Marshall and Rossman’s (1995) five modes of analytic procedures: “organizing the data; generating categories, themes, and patterns; testing the emergent hypotheses against the data; searching for alternative explanations of the data; and writing the report” (p. 113). Unexamined adherence to such processes would undermine Theo’s story and inappropriately “test” it instead of honoring it and accepting it for what it is.

Use of Joseph A. Maxwell’s (2005) strategies for categorizing data would have presented similar challenges. He described the process of rearranging pieces of data “into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts . . . [or] organizing the data into broader themes and issues” (p. 96). Although themes were apparent in Theo’s story, breaking her story into pieces for comparative purposes would have weakened it and would have presented the risk of failing to capture our joint meaning making.

Data analysis in autoethnography is more free-flowing than traditional methods. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner (2000) illuminated this process:

The authors privilege stories over analysis, allowing and encouraging alternative readings and multiple interpretations. They ask their readers to feel the truth of their stories and to become coparticipants, engaging the story line morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually (Richardson, 1994b, p. 745)

Theo's act of sharing her story (including the conscious and unconscious decisions of what to share and not share) and the reflections she shared served as her interpretation of her experiences. My analysis of her story offers a different interpretation, and the people who read this study will have additional interpretations.

Design Issues

Similar to the challenges of data analysis, traditional approaches to design, such as Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba's (1985) descriptions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are not appropriate for autoethnography because they address the "characteristics of the data: Are they or are they not *confirmable*?" (p. 300). It is not possible to *confirm* a person's story even in recognition of the fact that every story is "partial and situated" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 750).

Yet autoethnography represents a conundrum; most researchers (and those who judge research) do not know how to evaluate autoethnography (Holt, 2003). Although attention must be paid to design issues in autoethnography, the focus is very different. As Ellis and Bochner (2000) explained:

If you viewed your project as closer to art than science, then your goal would not be so much to portray the *facts* of what happened to you accurately, but instead to confirm the *meanings* you attached to the experience. You'd want to tell a story that readers could enter and feel a part of. You'd write in a way to evoke readers to feel

and think about your life, and their lives in relation to yours. You'd want them to experience the experience you're writing about. (p. 751)

This study is closer to literature than science in that it reads like a story, not like the testing of hypotheses. The reader is asked to engage with Theo's story—and my story—and to develop their own interpretations. The study is interpretive in that it seeks to understand how Theo makes meaning of her story. The feminist perspective positions Theo at the center of the study—unapologetically so.

Features and Characteristics

As scholars engaged in autoethnography expand their work and explore the meanings of this methodology and its impact on qualitative research, features have emerged that are sought in autoethnographic studies. Richardson (as cited in Holt, 2003; Jones, 2005) outlined five factors she uses: (a) substantive contribution to an understanding of social life, (b) aesthetic merit, (c) reflexivity, (d) emotional and intellectual impact, and (e) a clear expression of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of reality (Jones, pp. 772-773). These factors are not criteria, in the traditional sense, with which to judge the merits of autoethnography. Rather, they place emphasis on the primary qualities of autoethnography and why it is an effective and meaningful methodology.

The dialogue surrounding the components of a meaningful autoethnography is continual. Stacy Holman Jones (2005) developed a list of actions and accomplishments she seeks in her own autoethnographic work and that of others:

- Participation as reciprocity. . . .
- Partiality, reflexivity, and citationality as strategies for dialogue (and not 'mastery'). . . .

- Dialogue as a space of debate and negotiation. . . .
- Personal narrative and storytelling as an obligation to critique. . . .
- Evocation and emotion as incitements to action. . . .
- Engaged embodiment as a condition for change. . . . (p. 773)

Jones commented that her list is always evolving and is part of her research, not separate from it. I strived to include the components outlined by Richardson (as cited in Holt, 2003; Jones) and Jones in my study of Theo. Yet these lists are malleable, and as part of my work I discovered how to weave Theo's story, my story, and all of the data I gathered to make this autoethnographic work meaningful. I was assisted in this process by participation in an autoethnography listserv. Carolyn Ellis maintains the listserv and suggested that I join it after I contacted her to tell her about my study. It was very helpful to read of others' work with autoethnography and to learn from them.

Triangulation

Despite the unique design of autoethnography and the inability to mold it into a traditional style of research, I achieved triangulation through use of different methods of data collection: interviews, observation, and document analysis. Triangulation contributes to the internal validity and reliability of a study because it compensates for the fact that each data collection method has strengths and weaknesses (Esterberg, 2002). For example, observation allowed me to determine that Theo's actions complement and are consistent with her words (written and spoken) shared in interviews and gathered in document analysis. Interviews brought the documents to life and provided the context in which documents were interpreted. However, triangulation was not used to validate Theo's story itself; rather, it informed the context in which the study took place and shed light on Theo's meaning making.

Validity, Reliability, Generalizability, and Member Checking

The concepts of validity, reliability, and generalizability apply to autoethnography in unique ways:

- *Validity* [emphasis added] means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible . . . it helps readers communicate with others different from themselves, or offers a way to improve the lives of participants and readers or even your own. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751)
- Since we always create our personal narrative from a situated location, trying to make our present, imagined future, and remembered past cohere, there's no such thing as orthodox reliability in autoethnographic research. However, we can do *reliability* [emphasis added] checks. When other people are involved, you might take your work back to them and give them a chance to comment, add materials, change their minds, and offer their interpretations. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751)
- Our lives are particular, but they also are typical and *generalizable* [emphasis added], since we all participate in a limited number of cultures and institutions. We want to convey both in our stories. A story's generalizability is constantly being tested by readers as they determine if it speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know. Likewise, does it tell them about unfamiliar people or lives? Does a work have what Stake calls 'naturalistic generalization,' meaning that it brings 'felt' news from one world to another and provides opportunities for the reader to have vicarious experience of the things told? (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751)

The challenges of validity, reliability, and generalizability in autoethnography required that I write this study in a way that engages readers, allows them to make connections to Theo's story (and perhaps my story, as well), and results in development of their own meanings and interpretations. In part because this study was not anonymous, there were ethical implications related to the research process. I was particularly sensitive to the topics and issues Theo discussed during our time together. She did not ask me to refrain from divulging anything she shared, but I chose not to write about some highly sensitive topics that were not essential to her overall story.

My study was to be tested for validity, reliability, and generalizability by readers, including Theo and her colleagues, but rather than wait until the end product was produced, I discussed my findings with my peer, Rebecca Pitkin, to determine if my interpretations resonated with her. This was an extension of peer review, though peer review cannot be applied to autoethnography in the traditional sense as described by Merriam (2002a): "asking a colleague to scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible based on the data" (p. 26). The plausibility of Theo's story could not be assessed because it is *her* story and her story is the data. Therefore I approached this project similar to the manner in which Bateson (1989) shared her story and those of four others:

I have not tried to verify these narratives, beyond attending to issues of internal consistency and checking them against my knowledge of the individuals. The accounts as I heard them are themselves part of the process of composing lives. They are autobiographical, not biographical, shaped by each person's choice and selective memory and by the circumstances of our work together. No doubt they are shaped again by my own selections, resonating variously with my own experience. (p. 33)

Theo's story in this dissertation is autobiographical, not biographical, as in Bateson's (1989) study. I interviewed members of Theo's community, engaged in observation, and analyzed documents in order to gather information about the contexts in which Theo lives and works; such information was *not* used to verify her story. I expected that some of the data gathered through these means would include different interpretations of information shared by Theo. In traditional qualitative work such data would be considered negative cases, or "instances that cannot be accounted for by a particular interpretation or explanation can point up important defects in that account" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 112). However, the notion of "negative cases" did not fit with this autoethnographic study and its goal of highlighting Theo's story. Interestingly, all of the data I gathered corresponded with Theo's story, illuminating the transparency of Theo's leadership.

I provided Theo with two opportunities for member-checking: She read the transcripts of our interviews in order to verify and correct facts, and she read chapter 4 to further verify facts and offer her impressions of my interpretations and analyses. I was relieved to receive her response to chapter 4 and to learn that she was happy with the way I presented her story:

Naturally I neglected everything I should have done and read your paper. I loved it. I really liked the way you interwove your personal history and reflections, my story, and the analytic framework. Nice job. (Too bad my parents can't read it. But, Deb [her partner] will love it, I am sure.) (personal communication, May 12, 2006)

Theo shared the chapter with Deb and several members of president's council; after they read it Theo e-mailed me to say "They all loved it. So now you have a UMF fan club!" (personal

communication, May 16, 2006). Theo's assistant, Moira Wolohan, e-mailed me directly to share her response to chapter 4:

It was just wonderful, on so very many different levels. To learn of Theo, to learn of you, to enjoy your wonderful writing style, to be exposed to the theory, to learn of your understanding and application of theory to life and life to theory—you know the layers just went on and on. And I felt honored and humbled to be within the sphere of influence. Thank you. (personal communication, May 19, 2006)

I never imagined that members of the UMF community would take such interest in my study and offer their support to this extent. To use Moira's words, all of the feedback I received on chapter 4 makes *me* feel "honored and humbled to be within the sphere of influence" of Theo and her colleagues.

I also maintained an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by organizing all data, including audio tapes, interview transcripts, documents, and field notes, and stored everything in a secure location.

Limitations

This story is limited in its scope in that it shares the story of one woman. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized in a traditional manner. Yet it informs the knowledge base of the woman college president experience and may prompt further studies of this genre. It also informs the feminist perspective, meeting the goal of highlighting one woman's story, so that others may benefit from her experiences and the insights she shares. Furthermore, the study may be of particular interest to aspiring college presidents who are eager to learn more about the presidency.

The richness of the data gathered in this study was dependent on how much of herself and her story Theo was willing to share. At the beginning of the study I acknowledged that this was a potential limitation and noted that use of different data collection methods would help minimize this limitation. Yet Theo was completely open and engaged in this study and this limitation was not realized. I think that the rapport I established with Theo encouraged her full participation, but in general, Theo is very open.

Finally, this study was not anonymous, which is a strength because Theo's story is not diluted by attempts to mask her identity and that of her campus. However, I chose not to write about some sensitive issues and topics that I determined were not appropriate for a public document. This is probably unavoidable given the nature of Theo's position, and I do not think that her story is lacking as a result of these omissions.

CHAPTER 4

THEO'S JOURNEY: A LIFE OF TRANSFORMATION

In 1968 I thought we could do this work [advance the cause of women] and then go to the beach. I don't think that anymore, but I have realized that as the classic saying has it, you will not finish making the world perfect, but neither are you free to desist from the task. I am having a great time doing my bit, and living out the values I think are important.

Kalikow, 2000, p. 2

As I left Portland and drove north on the Maine turnpike on a mild Sunday in January 2006, I could not help but smile as my soul responded to the landscape around me. I grew up in northern New England, and although I have enjoyed living in different parts of the country, there is something special about being home. As I headed toward Farmington, my thoughts turned to my mother, Elaine, and I was reminded of a weekend we spent together on the coast of Maine several years ago. We were walking along the beach in Ogunquit and both of us commented on how much we loved being at the ocean. Mom described how interesting it was to her that even if you spend most of your childhood in one area and never live in that place again as an adult, it is always home. She reflected on the fact that my sister and I are New Englanders, just like our father, whereas her true home is found in the hills of western Pennsylvania. Our conversation turned to life journeys and how families that used to be in one town or area for generations are now spread across the country and the world, and the concept of home has been transformed as a result.³

My life journey brought me back to New England via the upper Midwest in a way I never imagined—through this dissertation study. As I exited the turnpike and headed north on state roads, warm memories of my mother faded to the background as anxiety seeped into

³ Reflexivity and autobiography are components of autoethnography. Therefore, I began this chapter with a personal story that leads into Theo's story. I comment on my experience of learning Theo's story throughout the chapter.

my mind. Would this study be successful? Would Theo and her colleagues truly welcome me? Would I make a fool of myself as I gathered data? Would my major professor be happy with my work? Could I meet my own expectations? Such questions floated through my mind as I made my way to my motel and spent the rest of that Sunday exploring the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) campus and the town of Farmington. I returned to my motel room just as it started snowing and I spent the evening watching the snow fall on a nearby lake, worried and excited about meeting Theo the following morning. As I reflected on the focus of transformation in this study, I wondered if I would be transformed as a result of my role as researcher.

The next day, my nervousness subsided as soon as I walked into Theo's office in Merrill Hall on the UMF campus. Theo's assistant, Moira Wolohan, looked up from her desk and said, "Well hello, you must be Leah!" and greeted me with great warmth. Soon I was welcomed by people passing through Theo's office, all of whom seemed to know who I was and why I was visiting Theo. An individual unfamiliar with Theo and UMF may have been surprised by the simplicity of the president's office; it is a basic suite with simple furniture, minimal decoration, and piles of reading materials balanced on top of metal filing cabinets. The tall, drafty windows provide glimpses of activity on the campus periphery, including downtown Farmington, and the creaks of the floorboards express the large, old building's weariness. Yet laughter, idle chitchat, hurried hellos, and hushed conversations waft through the hallways and office suites, filling the building with energy, a sense of purpose, and the reminder that there is much work to be done.

As Theo emerged from a meeting to greet me, I was immediately struck by her physical presence in the room. Her energy was captivating, and I felt as though everything I

read about her and the photos of her I viewed before my trip came to life in one split second. That first impression was the beginning of my awareness of Theo's presence. She is present in the moment, she is present with others, and she is present with herself. Through the course of this study I learned that her presence is a thread of continuity throughout all of the transformation she has experienced—her personal and professional transformation and the transformation of the environments in which she has lived and worked. As a result, the role of transformation is present throughout her story and is used to address the research questions that guided this study:

1. What are the relevant experiences of a longstanding and acclaimed successful woman college president?
2. What personal and professional experiences of Theodora J. Kalikow led to and are included in her role as a college president?

Using transformation as a thread with which to weave Theo's story allows me to consider her narrative in a holistic manner and serves as a reminder to avoid consideration of one piece of her life without due attention to the whole. The intent of this work is not to make Theo's story read easily; Carolyn G. Heilbrun (1988) suggested such a goal is unattainable because unlike men, women have no set narratives to follow. As a result, women's stories "are painful, the price is high, the anxiety is intense, because there is no script to follow, no story portraying how one is to act, let alone any alternative stories" (Heilbrun, p. 39).

In this autoethnography I attempt to do what Carolyn Ellis (1997) described as a goal of one of her early autoethnographic works:

I moved away from trying to make my tale a mirror representation of chronologically ordered events and toward telling a story, where the events and feelings were

cohered, where questions of meaning and interpretation were emphasized, and where readers could grasp the main points and feel some of what I felt. (p. 128)

As I share Theo's story in this interpretive study, the meaning she makes of her life journey is "mediated through [me as] the researcher" (Merriam, 2002b, p. 6). As a result, my account of Theo's story compromises its "truth":

Interpretive writing is akin to fiction, in that it is fashioned from a researcher's interpretation, or best guess, of what is going on. But it is not wholly fiction because it is rooted in social actors' actual lives; it is not simply made up. (Esterberg, 2002, p. 16)

Heilbrun (1988) also noted this downfall in the telling of others' stories, yet urged women to write about women's lives in order to help create a narrative for women: "There will be narratives of female lives only when women no longer live their lives isolated in the houses and the stories of men" (p. 47).

The purpose of this study is to explore Theo's experiences in order to help inform the literature about women leaders so that their experiences are no longer considered within male frameworks, thereby providing a narrative that can help inform studies of other women. My approach is like that of Mary Catherine Bateson's (1989) in her sharing of five women's stories as an exploration of their lives:

I have not tried to verify these narratives, beyond attending to issues of internal consistency and checking them against my knowledge of the individuals. The accounts as I heard them are themselves part of the process of composing lives. They are autobiographical, not biographical, shaped by each person's choice and selective

memory and by the circumstances of our work together. No doubt they are shaped again by my own selections, resonating variously with my own experience. (p. 33)

Like Bateson, I weave my story into this work, providing analysis of my experiences while interpreting Theo's story.

The (Continuing) Transformation of Theo

This study places Theo at the center as Estela Mara Bensimon and Catherine Marshall (1997) explained is crucial in feminist critical policy analysis. It shares her story and highlights the transformation she has experienced in her life. In addition to general personal transformation, I consider the transformation of Theo as a scholar and as a leader, as well as her leadership of the transformation of an institution. I do not separate these roles to suggest that they are unique and unrelated; rather, I consider her story from different angles in an attempt to appreciate the whole. An individual's life is very complex and any attempt to understand her journey in a holistic manner highlights the breadth and depth of her story while also making it clear that it is impossible to capture every moment and every detail. All of this is done with attention to Theo as a woman rather than contrasting her story with the experiences of men, thereby making "gender...a fundamental category" (Bensimon & Marshall, p. 9).

This study would not be possible without Theo's willingness to reflect on her life. Her age (mid-60s) provides her the vantage point from which to look at her life path and to consider the numerous roles she has assumed both personally and professionally. Although Theo is not ready to retire, she has gained enough experience to make meaning of her long career in higher education and acknowledges that her future is informed by the sense she has

made of her past experiences. This is echoed by Bateson's (1989) reflections on women's narratives:

Composing a life involves a continual reimagining of the future and reinterpretation of the past to give meaning to the present, remember best those events that prefigured what followed, forgetting those that proved to have no meaning within the narrative.

(pp. 29-30)

Theo's path has been shaped by decisions that have garnered attention (e.g., deciding early in her career to be open about her identity as a lesbian) as well as the quiet parts of each day (e.g., rowing on the lake at her country house). Such perspective is necessary in a woman's identification of her transformation. Heilbrun (1988) explained:

Acting to confront society's expectations for oneself requires either the mad daring of youth, or the colder determination of middle age. Men tend to move on a fairly predictable path to achievement; women transform themselves only after an awakening. And that awakening is identifiable only in hindsight. (p. 118)

Theo has not complied with our society's traditional expectations of women—especially of women born in the early 1940s—which is due in part to others' expectations of her that were communicated to her in childhood.

Regardless of the topic of conversation, Theo frequently made reference to her youth and her long-term personal mentors. Her relationships and experiences have sustained the foundation of her life journey. In addition, her life path has been shaped by opportunities—those provided to her by others as well as the ones she has created for herself. In turn, she has mentored and befriended many people, thereby continuing a circle of support that transforms all who enter it.

Personal Mentors

My conversations with Theo were peppered with her comments about her personal mentors. Although Theo spoke of many people who influenced her life, a few close loved ones stand out in terms of their contributions to her development and transformation as an individual, including her parents, aunt, and first professional boss who became a close friend. The environment in which she was raised allowed her to explore her interests and to find her passions. This was true of her life at home in the coastal town of Swampscott, Massachusetts, and her experiences away from home. Theo acknowledged the privilege of such an upbringing, which allowed her to embark on numerous transformations throughout her life.

Parents

Theo spoke most emphatically about her father's influence on her as a young child. Many of the memories she shared were about his workshop in the basement of their home. He was an engineer and taught Theo and her brother how to use his equipment and encouraged them to develop their own projects in his workshop:

We were allowed, under certain strict behavioral rules, to be down there, too, and as we got older we were allowed to use the equipment, again under strict rules, like "Clean it, put it back, don't leave a mess," and then when we were old enough, you know, we had our own little workspaces. . . . Whatever we wanted to explore, my parents would make it so we could explore it.

One of Theo's most fond memories of her father's workshop was when he created a rocket lab so that she and her brother could play "space cadet":

[The rocket lab had] some chairs, and a blackboard to draw the space things on, and a stick that was our joystick, you know, it was just a stick, but it had a red plastic top on it, so it was official, it was the control center.

Theo absorbed her father's creativity, knack for problem-solving, and love of exploration in her time with him. Although Theo regularly uses the skills her father taught her, she reflected on the overall theme of his teachings: "I think the point is my father taught us how to be."

One way in which Theo's father taught her "how to be" is in her interactions and relationships with others. Theo recounted the tale her father told her about a person who was moving to a new neighborhood and was worried about how the people there would treat her.

"Oh God, I wonder what the neighbors are gonna be like, are they going to be nice?"

"Well, how are your neighbors now?"

"Well, they're great, you know. We're very cooperative and friendly."

"And how were your neighbors in the house before?"

"Well they were great."

"In that case, don't worry. When you go to the next place, they'll be great too."

Theo commented that "the moral of the story is it's how you are as much as how [others] are that makes the difference in how [others] are gonna be." It was this type of lesson that Theo's father emphasized, and as a result Theo gained an understanding of how to be a respectful community member.

The lessons Theo gained from her father were reinforced by her mother, but in different settings. "My dad's realm was the basement and outside, and my mother's realm was the house." Theo's mother taught her how to cook and clean, and like her father,

emphasized the appropriate way to treat others. Theo recalled her mother's lesson about sharing:

I think when I was 8 or so, [my mother] taught me how to make gingerbread. That was the first thing I cooked . . . and piggy little me, I would have eaten the whole thing, except my brother came in with one of his playmates and my mother said, "Here, give them the gingerbread, and get them glasses of milk," and like that. And I wanted to eat the whole thing myself, but no, she was teaching me that when you make food, you share it.

One potential interpretation of Theo's story is that her mother was providing instruction on how to treat boys and men with secondary emphasis on sharing. I asked Theo if her brother was required to participate in domestic lessons as well, and she commented that "he learned quite a bit of it. He was a highly well-trained husband, his wife always says." It seems that rather than assign their children gender-specific roles, Theo's parents prepared them to be successful at home and in the world regardless of where their paths would take them.

Despite the fact that Theo's mother was successful in the domestic realm, her professional dreams were not realized. As a young woman she attended the museum school affiliated with the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, but had to drop out during the Depression to do clerical work in a relative's shoe factory. Theo shared: "I think she always resented it, but she did it anyway." Theo's portrayal of her mother speaks to Heilbrun's (1988) description of the mother-daughter relationship before the women's movement of the 1970s:

Whatever the drawbacks, whatever the frustrations or satisfactions of the mother's life, her mission was to prepare the daughter to take her place in the patriarchal succession, that is, to marry, to bear children (preferably sons), and to encourage her

husband to succeed in the world. But for many women, mothers and daughters alike, there moved in their imaginations dreams of some other life: of personal accomplishment, of the understanding a control of hard facts and complex problems, of a place in a community where women were in sufficient numbers to render the accomplished woman neither lonely nor an anomaly. Above all, the dream of taking control of one's life without the intrusion of a mother's patriarchal wishes for her daughter, without the danger of injuring the much loved and pitied mother. (pp. 118-119)

Even though Theo's mother did not raise Theo to repeat her own life journey, Theo's domestic training has served her well in knowing how to care for herself and her loved ones. It is clear that with her parents' encouragement and support, she has successfully pursued a life that, as Heilbrun described, may have been left to her mother's imagination.

Both of Theo's parents contributed to her development as an individual, yet her stories about her father are at the forefront. Perhaps that is due to the fact that Theo described her father as a genuinely happy person—as is she—whereas her mother “wasn't a happy person at all.” Theo's interpretation of her parents' behaviors and teachings are a result of her perspectives and worldviews and is influenced by their perspectives and worldviews (Merriam, 2002b). This is reminiscent of my mother's reflection on parenthood and parents' interactions with their children; she told me that all parents can hope for is that they do a little better than they perceived their own parents did in raising children, and that fewer mistakes are repeated with each generation.

Although Theo did not comment on her parents' mistakes, she mentioned that her parents did not handle emotional conversations well and that she has made a conscious attempt not to avoid emotional issues:

I think that was their generation, you know, particularly for first generation immigrant types. You don't talk about stuff like that, and you certainly don't talk about health or emotions or anything like that. If somebody has anything bad happen to them you speak about it in stage whispers, not where the children will hear, and all that. . . . I always thought from my parents' example that not talking about stuff, or not acknowledging stuff, is probably what makes you even more nutty. So you don't have to dwell on it, and you don't have to talk about it for a long time, but you can at least say what it is.

Part of Theo's success in this arena is due to the fact that as a teacher and administrator she has had to deal with "crazy people" and throughout her life has had "crazy friends"—dealing with others' behavior has required her to be present emotionally.

Theo's comments on her parents' treatment of emotional discourse speaks to Heilbrun's (1988) explanation that when reflecting on their lives, women frequently reexamine their "perceptions of, among much else, the role of parents in their lives . . . and examine with new awareness the hitherto mutely accepted constraints on their lives" (p. 64).

Heilbrun explained that such awareness centers on fathers:

As representatives of the patriarchy, [fathers] are the pivot on which, usually in memory, the new awareness turns. Mothers have no obvious role in this change, but some other female mentor or figure, often not even known personally, most often

dead, operates in the new female plot to enhance the reaction from the father and encourage or inspire the awakening. (p. 64)

Theo did not attribute any constraint in her personal life to her father or her perception of patriarchy. She did, however, speak of two women who provided her with a type of guidance and support that inspired her as a woman—her Aunt Sarah and her close friend Barbie.

Leah's Interlude: A Parent's Mistakes and a Woman of Influence. This space between the story of Theo's parents and the story of the women who have influenced her life evokes great emotion in me. Memories of my mother are flashing through my mind. Even though she died almost four years ago, she continues to be one of the great influences in my life. As I move forward with Theo's story, I am overwhelmed with the memory of my mother's greatest teaching. In order to understand my interpretations of Theo's story, I must revisit that memory. My need echoes Ellis' (1993) assertion that "one way of knowing about others' intimate experiences [such as death] is to reflect on our own" (p. 725).

On one hot summer evening in New Hampshire four years ago my immediate family gathered for dinner on the back porch of my parents' home. The question that narrates my memory of that night is reminiscent of the many Passover seders I enjoyed as a kid when the Haggadah led us to ask, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" I answer that question in my mind frequently, and instead of referencing the Jews' exodus from Egypt, I think of my mother's departure from our lives. That night, on our back porch, looking at my parents' beautiful gardens, my family was creating one more memory that would soon help sustain us for the rest of our lives, when all nights would be different.

That family dinner was the setting for my mother's most significant teaching moment, which I wrote about in an essay seven months after she died:

One week before you died, as our family finished dinner on the back porch, you witnessed a moment of dysfunction between my father and me. In retrospect it was a result of the stress we were all enduring—the stress that you were dying, the stress of sadness, the stress of helplessness. I ran away from the situation, yet you insisted that we regroup, that we talk about that interaction. You reminded us that all of our feelings are valid and that even though a person may not intend to attack the listener with anger or criticism, the effect of another person's behavior is a matter of perception. You challenged my sister and me to be better at managing relationships than what you had demonstrated for us during your life. You were in tears when you asked us to not run away from each other, to develop strong relationships, to listen. To not forget that we are a family even though you were leaving us. I know of no other person who could maintain such strength and clarity to teach her daughters a valuable lesson at the end of her life. You were not selfish during your life and you were not selfish during your death. Instead, you were concerned about the welfare of your loved ones. (Ross, 2003a, p. 2)

Like Theo, I struggle to be better at handling emotions than my parents. Although my mother and father discussed sensitive topics with each other and their children (unlike Theo's parents), some of the dips and curves in my path through life are the result of relearning skills my parents did not model well.

During my first visit to UMF, my father and his partner, Anne, visited me in Farmington. While eating dinner one evening, Anne shared amusing anecdotes about how she handles my father's dysfunctional moments. My father responded by expressing his admiration for Anne and her ability to let stressful moments roll off her back. He reflected on

how in the moment, he responds on an emotional level so quickly that his intellect does not have time to override his tendency to overreact to simple problems. As I listened to my father, I realized that his self-reflection was a gift because as he described himself, he described me. I suddenly understood the way in which I often react to the challenges of daily life with my husband, Juan. Although it is unlikely that my father and I will ever be as laid back as Anne, I realized that we were rising to my mother's challenge to work on ourselves and our relationships with loved ones. It would not surprise me if my mother's reminder to us was Anne and her presence in our lives. I have known Anne for two years, but I see that she is becoming one of the women of influence in my life. *End of interlude.*

Women of Influence

I could not help but notice the happiness that consumed Theo when she described the summers of her childhood. From 1947 to 1960 she spent eight weeks of summer each year at a camp for Jewish girls owned by her Aunt Sarah. Camp Speedwell was on a lake in New Hampshire where Theo first went as a camper and became a counselor in her teenage years. Although the camp offered opportunities for girls to have fun swimming and playing sports, it is the lessons Theo learned there that shape her stories, many of which center on her aunt.

Theo remembers Aunt Sarah as “one of the first examples of an independent woman person, leader, you know, in control of things, that I had. [It's a] great, great role model story.” She has fond memories of her visits to camp:

We would go up there when it was off-season and my dad would do things. We remodeled the kitchen in the farmhouse, which was where my aunt lived. . . . When we took the walls off there were cornhusks for insulation and there were shutters to draw inside to keep the Indian arrows out and all sorts of stuff. It was a great house. It

was a great place . . . the whole camp . . . the lake and the woods and the field. It was a great place for kids to grow up and play and everything.

In addition to having great fun at camp year-round, it was that same setting that served as the backdrop for some of Theo's early, fundamental life lessons.

During Theo's first summer at camp she gained a memorable lesson in humility. She described the incident in the Plymouth State College alumni magazine during her interim presidency:

Learning is not always painless or unselfconscious. A key memory—the first time I am ever in a rowboat. I'm about six, and decide that rowing, as the counselor is doing it, looks fun and easy. So I announce that I know how to do it (after all, IT IS MY AUNT'S CAMP) and I want my turn. The counselor, skeptically, lets me take the oars. I fall on my backside, lose an oar overboard, and bruise my ego colossally. All my cheeks burn for hours. (Kalikow, 1993b, p. 2)

The finesse with which Theo tells such stories in public forums—even ones that portray her as a “real” person who has made mistakes—is remarkable, especially since she draws on them to relearn lessons or inform her work at hand. Theo does not attempt to present herself as a specimen of perfection who assumes the role of the glossy, flawless leader. The resurfacing of stories in Theo's life—in all of our lives—reflects what Ellis (1997) described as the way we live: “We do not live life linearly. Thoughts and feelings circle around us, play back, then forward” (p. 125). Theo's rowboat lesson must have been painful at the time, particularly since she embarrassed her aunt as well as herself, yet the humility she acquired as a result of that experience has served her well throughout her life and reappears in other stories.

Camp Speedwell is also where Theo learned to conquer her fears at the urging of Aunt Sarah, a lesson that she shared with Plymouth State readers in the same column:

Sitting one morning at breakfast with my campers, I'm proud of my new state [camp counselor]. Idly I gaze over at the great fieldstone fireplace, with the first fire of the season blazing away. And there, slowly, because still cold, is a three-foot-long milk snake, slowly, slowly, weaving down between the fieldstones on its way to the floor. Or a breakfast table full of campers. Nobody notices this but me. I hurry over to my aunt's table to tell her. She says, "You're the nature counselor, deal with it, and don't make a scene." Gulp. I position myself nonchalantly beside the fireplace, and as the snake comes within reach I grab it behind the head (all 18-to-50 feet of it curl around my arm) and march it off to the kitchen, where the kitchen boy takes it outside and murders it. Nothing, nothing, can ever make me afraid again. (Kalikow, 1993b, p. 2)

Theo's gift for storytelling includes clever use of humor, and she does not hesitate to make fun of herself. Yet Theo's messages clearly convey her admiration for Aunt Sarah and the role Aunt Sarah played in her growth as an individual. Despite the differences in her relationships with loved ones, all of Theo's mentors have had high expectations of her and challenged her to do her best in every situation. Perhaps it was that foundation that fostered Theo's development of high expectations for herself—expectations she carried beyond the coastline of Swampscott; through the lake, field, and woods of Camp Speedwell; past the regal setting of Wellesley College; and into adulthood.

Leah's Interlude: An Auntie of Influence. I was drawn to Theo's stories about the women who have influenced her because I, too, have been influenced by several women in my life. It has been a privilege for me to know women from a variety of backgrounds with

different lifestyles. My mother was one of those women, but she also exposed my sister, Hannah, and me to strong women and encouraged us to foster relationships with women in our extended family.

One of the most influential women in my life was my “auntie” Alison, nicknamed Queenie, a close friend of my mother who spent a lot of time with our family. Queenie always took great interest in Hannah and me, and when Hannah and I became adults, Queenie made it clear that we were her friends, not simply Elaine’s daughters. We could talk to Queenie about anything and she offered love and advice without judgment, which so often casts shadows on relationships with relatives. Queenie made me feel special, and she provided a balance to my relationship with my mother.

When my mother died, I took comfort in the fact that Queenie would be there to offer support and I could go to her for the type of advice my mother would offer. Yet eight months after my mother died, Queenie died of non-smokers’ lung cancer. I reflected on the role she played in my life in the comments I made at her funeral:

Although Alison and I were not blood relatives, I see her in myself when I look in the mirror. Sometimes I see the memories, but even when taking a quick glance, I see Alison’s legacy. She was a confident woman who freely shared herself with others. She was curious about people’s lives and always asked them dozens of questions, regardless of whether or not she knew them. Yet Alison also spoke of the lessons she learned throughout her life—the good lessons as well as the tough ones. She was a real person with hopes and fears, and I respected the fact that she shared her successes and failures so that others could learn from her. (Ross, 2003b, p. 1)

My interest in studying women—in this case, Theo—was stimulated by my relationships with Queenie and my mother. Exploring the lives of women is a testament to their influence on my growth as an individual, and is a way in which I can transform the pain of losing them into creativity and make a contribution to women. *End of interlude.*

It was not until Theo was in her first job after graduating from Wellesley that she met Barbie, another significant personal mentor. Theo was working in a laboratory at Columbia Medical School in New York City and Barbie was her boss. They became friends and their friendship has withstood the test of time. Barbie was not a professional mentor to Theo, but she has been a figure in Theo's life for more than 40 years. Theo described Barbie as:

Sort of a surrogate parent figure. Just somebody to be there and . . . go visit . . . she was always supportive, and [she and her partner] were always friendly, and eager to come visit, and go on hikes, and go cross-country skiing, and go sailing, and stuff like that.

Barbie is now in her 90s and she continues to be an important part of Theo's life. This type of relationship is remarkable, for as Heilbrun (1988) noted, the stories of women's friendships—especially between successful public figures—receive little attention.

Heilbrun's reference to "the supporting group of friends behind many outstanding women . . . whose public lives could hardly have endured without such support" (p. 98) speaks to Theo's life as a public figure in higher education. Barbie is just one example of a long-term friendship that has surely sustained Theo as she has navigated the successes and challenges of a lifetime. Theo described the need for such friendships in a speech to new UMF students during orientation. She spoke of college as an adventure story: "Every hero worth her salt

finds some friends for the journey. The way is long, with many challenges, and it helps to have companionship, or at least someone to listen” (Kalikow, 1995a, p. 1).

Heilbrun (1988) encouraged women studying women’s lives to pay attention to friendships between women. She wrote that “the sign of female friendship is not whether friends are homosexual or heterosexual, lovers or not, but whether they share the wonderful energy of work in the public sphere” (p. 108). It is noteworthy that Barbie entered Theo’s life soon after Theo graduated from college. Theo left Wellesley for a new life in the big city, watching a world of turmoil disappear in her rearview mirror. It was at Wellesley that Theo realized she is a lesbian, yet during her years on campus the administration was adamant that she *not* be gay. It must have been refreshing for Theo to meet Barbie, a lesbian, and Barbie’s partner, and to engage in friendships with women who were living with the type of openness Theo was denied as a young woman.

Sexuality

Theo was not closeted about her sexuality at Wellesley, but her ability to be herself was thwarted at every corner. That tone was set during her first few days on campus:

Times have sure changed, but this was in 1958, don’t forget. I went off to college having had some few inklings about being gay before, but you know it was really up in the air. I didn’t know what the hell I was, but I figured, okay, it’s college, we can talk about everything . . . we’re sitting around somebody’s room, and we’re talking about everything under the sun, and that came up, and I just probably said something about, “Oh you know, I think lesbianism is cool” . . . and the next thing you know, I’ve got a note to go see the dean . . . I thought it might be something nice. It wasn’t nice. My roommate had complained to the dean that she was scared of me because

maybe I was gay. . . . So they just sort of put me on notice that I wasn't to be a lesbian.

Theo spent her first year of college focused on academics, but as a sophomore she decided to seek out the lesbian community on campus and learned that it revolved around the theatre. Her abilities with construction tools provided her easy entrée to the group and she quickly became involved in backstage work, which allowed her to meet other gay students at Wellesley.

As an upper-class student, Theo was yet again chastised by Wellesley administrators for being a lesbian, who also outed her to her parents. She was dating a woman in her residence hall, and when a floor mate discovered that two women were in a romantic relationship, she reported what she viewed to be a violation of the honor code:

[The administrators] were a little hysterical, so that's the point where they probably notified the parents. And they kicked me out of the dorm and sent me over to some other dorm. And they said we couldn't see each other. And I had to go see a shrink, which was fine. I went to see the shrink every week. I got on the bus and went to Newton, and went to the shrink, and complained about life in general, and I'm sure gained not one iota of insight into my problems, such as they were. I think my problems were . . . trying to grow up and be gay and everything. So anyway, and [my girlfriend and I] weren't allowed to see each other alone anymore. So we always got a chaperone, and we met for dinner at one of the campus snack bars.

Theo complied with the College's rules because she had no way to circumvent them (e.g., no car to take off campus). In addition, she wanted to stay in school and graduate, but she was angry with Wellesley for the incredibly poor manner in which she was treated by the

administration. Furthermore, the administrators were hypocrites: “The dean who told me not to be a lesbian was a lesbian!”

Despite the fact that Theo’s identity as a lesbian was scandalous during her college experience, she has been open about her sexuality as an adult. When asked how being out has influenced her career, Theo commented that she “figured out a long time ago that I better be out because if I was in the closet, then people could do bad things to me.” She also reflected on the notion that in general, if people learn that an individual is hiding something, they question the person’s trustworthiness:

I think that’s why it’s so hard for people that are in the closet or are working in the workplace where it’s not permitted to be a little bit out. It’s gotta be very hard. I just never bothered with that.

Theo is unaware of any professional consequences of her decision to be out in all of her workplace settings:

You know, somebody has asked me, “What about all the jobs you didn’t get because you were a lesbian?” I said, “I don’t know about those jobs, and I don’t know about those opportunities that didn’t come ‘cause nobody offered them to me and so I don’t bother with that stuff.”

My perception of Theo’s comment is that she does not intend to be flippant; rather, she has spent her life being true to herself and has succeeded in living the life she desires regardless of any barriers, apparent or invisible. Yet that does not mean that Theo has been blind to the inequities in higher education and the broader community, including the “genderedness [that] is not always overt and identifiable” (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997, p. 9). In fact, she has

spent much of her professional career committed to improving the status for women, which is explored later in this chapter.

Partners

Theo's unwillingness to hide her sexuality has allowed her to be open about her romantic relationships. Early in her career, however, she dated a woman who was not out:

[She] was so far in the closet that . . . I used to joke with her that if we had parties, they'd have to be in a post office box. And we didn't last that long because she was not willing to be out, and I was not willing to be in. . . . The time we were partners everybody knew we were and she was the only one who didn't know that they knew.

It made her feel better, but everybody else thought it was ridiculous.

After spending many years learning how to juggle her professional and personal lives, Theo settled into a long-term relationship that lasted 20 years. She did not hide her partner in professional circles, and when Theo became president of UMF, the campus community welcomed them as a couple. Although that relationship ended a few years later, Theo has been with her current partner, Deb, for several years. Deb is visible on campus as Theo's partner in formal and informal ways.

Deb

Theo met Deb through mutual friends and when their relationship became serious, Deb and her daughter moved in with Theo in Farmington. Soon thereafter Deb was hired by the UMF admissions office. Unlike Theo's previous partner, Deb is happy to support Theo in her role as president: "My former partner . . . didn't want to be the president's spouse at all! . . . Deb wants to go to things. She's so cute. It's a big surprise."

Theo speaks very highly of Deb and the influence Deb has had on her as a person. For example, although Theo has always enjoyed exercising, Deb has challenged her in new ways:

[Deb] was getting ready to do the Ironman and she was entering a half-Iron race over in New Hampshire, and they had a sprint and I said, "Oh, I could do that." And the next thing you know, she got me a bike, and she got me a coach, and she says, "Well now, you've gotta work on your swimming, and you gotta run." So I did it, and then of course I came in first in my age group, and so then I was hooked.

Competing in triathlons has become one of Theo's passions, and she placed third in her age group at the 2005 National Senior Games.

In addition to encouraging Theo to reach her athletic potential, Deb has brought a lot of comfort to Theo's home life. Theo considers herself to be a simple person with basic needs, but Deb adds warmth to their home:

[Deb] brings the warm fuzzies, and the dust fuzzies, and the clutter and everything. I would live in a box, I would. I would have my books, and my art pictures, and I wouldn't have any pictures around. You know, she drags them out . . . she's got all our parents stuck all over the piano, and the kids and everything.

Theo's distaste for the clutter of photographs and other mementos is not representative of her warmth as a person and the warmth in her relationships with loved ones. Although some of her loved ones are men, her willingness to talk about her relationships with women (friendships as well as life-partnerships) is critical to the feminist perspective. Heilbrun (1988) reflected on this necessity:

In the old style "autobiography," women never told of their love for other women. That love is various, wide enough to focus, for a lifetime or the life of a passion, on

one other woman. It is this love, I am certain, this sense of identification with women alone, not as fellow sufferers but as fellow achievers and fighters in the public domain, upon which the success of the current feminist movement depends.

As Theo's partner, Deb is also her closest friend, and despite the fact that the life they lead together seems quiet and unassuming (to the extent allowed by Theo's role as a college president), Theo's inclusion of Deb in all aspects of her life, including her professional life, is significant.

Friendships

Theo has collected a wide variety of acquaintances throughout her life, and maintains friendships with many of them. She enjoys spending time with people, but does not consider herself to be one who needs close friends:

I live in my own head a lot. I like it . . . I don't have any confidantes . . . I've never been one to do that . . . I enjoy people, and I enjoy doing things with people, and you know, going out to dinner, or going skiing, or going hiking together, or you know, doing worky things, or all the people I know in the community, it's fun to know them and everything. And part of feeling that you belong in a place is to know the people that are there, and know something about them.

When I pointed out to Theo that it seems that her life has been full of interesting people, she talked more about friendship:

Meeting a lot of different kinds of people with different points of view, and different backgrounds and life histories has been, that's been very fascinating. I've got friends that have lasted a long time! And so they must be getting something out of it too,

whatever it is. I think probably one of the things is that I'm a good listener and they can jabber to me for hours and I'll be happy to listen to them.

Perhaps what is most noteworthy about Theo's friendships is not in how she defines those relationships (e.g., her friends are not confidantes), but rather in how she has maintained a commitment to keep these people in her life despite the busyness of her career.

It is not difficult to imagine why people are attracted to spending time with Theo. Although she is clearly a gifted intellectual, it is her wit, humor, and presence that drew me to her. Theo is alive in the moment, and moments with her are captivating; there does not appear to be a "Theo façade," and she invites others to join her wherever she is emotionally. Her presence takes many forms: it may be a loud conversation when she is upset about something during a meeting, as I witnessed during my time with her; it may be her laughter in the retelling of jokes she loves; or it may be the honesty in her comments about personal challenges.

Loss

One of the personal challenges Theo and I discussed at great length is the loss of loved ones. Although death is certainly the most tragic type of loss, other types of loss are significant. Two years after Theo became president of UMF, her long-term partner of 20 years left her. The devastation Theo experienced as her relationship ended was heightened by the fact that her partner's departure was so public. They lived in the president's home on campus (then it was a house on Main Street, surrounded by academic buildings and residence halls), and people literally watched Theo's partner move out:

It was a good thing I had a job and I had to come to work every day and do my job . . . I could go home to that big house and be miserable, which I did a lot . . . but I

sorta got through it. . . . When I was home I managed to find a lot of chores to do.

Well and there were a lot of chores anyway . . . she had done some of them and then I had to do all of them. And so that kept my mind off things.

Although Theo learned that it was a gift to have to go to work during that difficult time, she commented that most people on campus did not inquire about her emotional wellbeing. It is in such situations in which prominent leaders—so often surrounded by many people in their work lives—find themselves alone. Theo also commented that she thinks people do not want to intrude on others' lives, which is characteristic of New England culture.

Theo acknowledged the challenge of coping with the loss of her relationship while fulfilling her duties as president. Slowly she found ways to cope and to heal:

I would go out to the [country] house and . . . cut trails in the woods. . . . It was a way to let the time pass, which is what you need the most in a situation like that. And so the time passed, and I'm not that introspective of a person, but I did what I needed to do for introspection. You know, basically I wasn't into blaming myself for the fact that she left . . . she was on her own journey and I had tried, you know, for all the time we were together to help her negotiate her own journey and I think I did a damned good job except for the fact that the outcome was that she carried on somewhere else! And, you know, I got over the fact that she wasn't there anymore . . . and that she had gone off. And I got over being mad that she wasn't dead, you know, 'cause if she would have left me the least she could do was be dead so I could grieve properly, but I grieved anyway.

As part of her healing process, Theo went camping with friends in Baja, California. The trip did not go as planned and was a “total crazed adventure,” as she described, that ended up being therapeutic. She returned to Farmington refreshed and able to “get on with things.”

One of the women who accompanied Theo on the camping trip, Sally, was a former colleague from Plymouth State College. Not long after their time in California, Sally visited Farmington and lived with Theo for several months while battling breast cancer. Theo helped care for her and also traveled with her to visit friends and colleagues. Sally’s health declined and she moved to Connecticut to be close to family members at the end of her life and died soon thereafter. Theo lost one of her close friends soon after she lost her relationship with her life partner. I commented on the intensity of so much loss in a short amount of time; Theo’s response was simple: “Yeah, that wasn’t good.”

Theo strikes me as resilient—someone who finds new paths after significant challenge. In the years after Sally’s death she found happiness with Deb and success at work. Sadly, however, her next experience with significant loss would include the deaths of her parents in 2005. They were residents of an assisted living facility in Massachusetts; her mother had dementia and her father cared for her full-time. At age 93 Theo’s father had heart surgery and spent two months in the hospital trying to recover; her mother was moved to a nursing home. Her parents never saw each other again.

Theo reflected on her father’s death in the president’s column of the UMF alumni magazine:

I have to tell you a story about my dad, who just died at 93. In February he had heart surgery to correct a valve problem. His recovery took lots longer that expected, and he was barely conscious for two months. Finally, at the beginning of April we were

able to have our first, and last, conversation. I drove down to Massachusetts anticipating we'd talk about family topics and his own progress. But no—the first words from him were, “How's the Education Center project?” After recovering from my surprise, I was able to report that we were almost done, well on our way to meeting The Kresge Challenge. He replied, “That's good news.” (Kalikow, 2005, inside front cover)

When Theo told this story to me in person, she commented that her parents were always very supportive of her career and were invested in the success of UMF. Her parents had contributed to the campaign for the Education Center and as Theo described, they were “rooting it on.” In sharing this story with the UMF community, Theo provided a glimpse into her world in a manner that allowed her to build connections with others. She used the story to introduce her update on the campaign to build the new Education Center. Surely many readers can relate to the story of loss, and it was an effective way to make herself emotionally accessible without being self-centered and diverting attention away from the message.

Two months after Theo's father died, her mother passed away:

I think she died because all of a sudden something in her head said, “You know, nobody's paying attention to me. He's gone.” You know, she could never grasp the fact that he was dead. She didn't go to the funeral or anything anyway, and then she died.

Theo's parents are buried in a Jewish cemetery in Peabody, Massachusetts, and she and her brother are planning the unveiling of their memorial stones. In addition, Deb's father and the father of Theo's sister-in-law died in 2005. When I spent time with Theo, she was glad that 2005 was over and hoped that 2006 would be an uneventful year.

My mother used to say that life is what happens on your way to the grave; it was her take on a common theme uttered by so many people who are aware of the brevity of the life journey. Her intent was not to sound morbid, and she frequently talked about embracing death as part of life. I can picture her in the gardens at home, weeding and dead-heading the flowers, commenting on how refreshing it was to work in the dirt and be reminded of the cycle of life. I was touched by Theo's willingness to be up front about the loss she has experienced and how difficult it has been. Hearing Theo's story validates my experiences with loss and the sadness I feel, and is also a reminder of my strength and resilience.

Leah's Interlude: A Reflection on Loss. In late 2002, when my husband and I started to seriously consider a move from the Washington, DC area to Iowa to pursue our doctoral degrees, I told my grief counselor that I did not think I could move. My mother had recently died, and I did not want to leave my life as my mom knew it—she had been to my apartment, she knew what I did for work, and she had met my friends. The thought of leaving DC without my mother “knowing” my life caused me great distress and virtually immobilized me. Then one morning I woke up and remembered when I ended my relationship with an abusive boyfriend shortly after graduating from college. It was a very painful time for me and when I rebuffed my mother's kind comments about my future, she told me that I had no idea how I would feel in six weeks or six months. She was right, of course, and later that same year I was dating again. As Juan and I contemplated a move to Iowa, I realized that it would not be easy, but that my emotional turmoil was not a reason to pass up opportunity. Nine months later we moved to Iowa, and although I cried when we left DC, I knew that I was a survivor, and that somehow my mother was joining me in my new adventure. *End of interlude.*

Humor

Perhaps Theo's ability to be present about her life experiences—good and bad—is due to the fact that her positive outlook on life is framed by humor. All of my conversations with Theo and all of the conversations I observed between Theo and others included humor. Theo uses humor in a variety of ways: to put people at ease, to lighten the mood, to provide perspective on a problem, and to simply enjoy the moment. Theo likes to laugh, and she enjoys other people's humor as well as her own. During one of our meetings we talked about the role humor plays during difficult times and how important it is to laugh. Theo commented that “you got a long time to be dead. You might as well laugh while you're alive.”

Theo traces her love of humor to her family. She grew up in a family that liked to laugh and be witty:

It's a long family tradition of being ridiculous. I think it must be genetic. My family always has enjoyed a lot of fooling with language. Puns, and double meanings, and cross-linguistic puns, and anything you can think of like that. It sort of comes out in different ways. My brother and sister-in-law are really great on the word plays, and I'm sort of better on the off-the-cuff retorts and remarks. And I like to tell jokes, and sometimes I even remember them. One of the things that I remember is that I was always a pretty good humorous writer—at least I always thought I was good—I could write parodies of serious poems, and ridiculous rants, and stuff like that. One of the things I had to be physically taught when I came to college is that not everything that you write is supposed to be fun. You know, [it was] a hard lesson for me, but I think I learned it.

Certainly Theo exhibits an understanding of the appropriate use of humor. Perhaps the most charming aspect of her comedy is when she turns it on herself, which she does frequently. During my second visit to UMF I attended a president's council meeting and listened as Theo and her closest advisors prepared for a visit from the University of Maine System Chancellor later that morning. Theo's language was particularly colorful as she ranted and raved about state-level administrators and policies while simultaneously cracking jokes. Everyone in the room was laughing when the provost, Allen, turned to me and said, "Did you expect a college president to talk like this?" to which I replied, "I have much worse on tape!" Theo and her colleagues laughed and I realized that Theo was not worried about what she had said during our taped conversations—funny or otherwise—which reflected her confidence.

One of the most important lessons Theo learned about humor was her father's insistence that the purpose of humor is to make people laugh, not to make them feel bad. Theo shared that "otherwise, there's still a large possibility of things to do with humor, so I enjoy that. Might as well be happy." Theo is happy, and the sound of her laughter weaves through my memories of my time with her. During my last one-on-one interview with Theo I asked her to tell me some of her favorite jokes and we had great fun laughing together. It became clear to me that this study of Theo would not be complete if I did not share one of her favorite jokes as a representation of her outlook on life:

A man and a parrot are in an airplane together, and the parrot starts carrying on terribly. "I want a drink! Give me a drink now! Bring me a drink! Give me the blanket! I want all these things right now!" And so pretty sure enough they bring him the drink, they bring him the blanket, and he's screaming more. "Now I need peanuts! Bring me the peanuts!" The guy sitting next to him says, "Gee, he's gettin' all this

service. I'm gonna try that." So he starts yelling, "Bring me a drink! Bring me a blanket! Bring me food!" So finally the stewardess comes, and she grabs the parrot, and she grabs the man, and she throws them both out of the plane. And as they're falling down to Earth, the parrot says, "Gee, you're pretty feisty for a guy with no wings."

Theo's enjoyment and use of humor is certainly not trivial. The importance of humor in women's lives was noted by Heilbrun (1988):

In the end, the changed life for women will be marked, I feel certain, by laughter. It is the unfailing key to a new kind of life. In films, novels, plays, stories, it is the laughter of women together that is the revealing sign, the spontaneous recognition of insight and love and freedom. . . . Women laugh together only in freedom, in the recognition of independence and female bonding. (p. 129)

Heilbrun's description of "freedom" speaks to Theo's current path in life. She feels free to live her life as she pleases, free to lead UMF in the manner she deems best, and free to speak her mind. That freedom is the result of her continuing transformation; I have explored her transformation as an individual and now move to her transformation as a scholar, which will show the way to her transformation as a leader.

The Transformation of a Scholar

Theo's education began at home; her parents took education very seriously and also exposed Theo and her brother to cultural events, including the arts, so that they would be well-rounded individuals. One example of Theo's early formal education was in music:

I got it into my mind when I was a little, little kid—I don't know how old this was—that I wanted to play the bugle. And my parents couldn't think I was serious. I got this

from the Boy Scout handbook, I feel quite sure. However, I saved up my quarter a week allowance for many weeks until I had \$3.25 to buy half of a bugle, and then I guess they thought it was serious, so they chipped in the other \$3.25 and I got a bugle, and I got lessons. My mother schlepped me every week to Lou Ames' music studio where he taught me how to play the bugle, and learn how to read music, and everything like that, and I thought this was fabulous. Of course my parents made me perform, and you know, when we went to camp and it was sunset, I had to play Taps and everything like that, which was fine.

Theo's interest in music started at home, where her parents exposed her to the music of Mozart, Beethoven, and other famous composers. Both of her parents loved music, and her mother was particularly excited about her children's involvement with music as it was an extension of her own interest in the arts.

Music has played a significant role in Theo's life. She enjoyed participating in musical ensembles in secondary school, including the marching band. After the bugle, she wanted to play the trumpet, but instead she had to play the clarinet because the instrument came to her as a hand-me-down from one of her cousins. Theo was animated when she shared her stories about her years in marching band:

I loved the band 'cause you got to have a nice spiffy uniform, and march, and make a lot of noise. Only I discovered that I got really cold fingers playing in the band outside in football season, so I switched to the drum for the football season. . . . I loved marching, I loved my uniform. I swear to God, if all it had been was marching and uniforms, I would have joined the Army.

Later Theo learned to play the guitar, and when she went to Wellesley she was exposed to more music than was available to her in her hometown. She went to musical performances on campus and has been going to performances ever since, wherever she lives. Yet it was not until Theo was an adult that she received her true musical education from Robert J.

Lurtsema, a Boston deejay who hosted a daily classical music show on National Public Radio (NPR). She listened to “Robert J” for close to 15 years and learned from him as he moved through all of the works of major composers. Theo reflected on Robert J’s impact on her: “I learned a lot of things, and I heard things that I would never have heard otherwise, and it was a great gift.”

Leah’s Interlude: A Musical Education. Theo’s stories about music made me smile. I, too, grew up in a house full of music and played several instruments. My mother played the piano, but my more formal musical education was encouraged by my father. For several years my father drove me into town for my weekly clarinet lesson with Mr. Giles. The radio was always tuned to NPR and my father would quiz me about the music being played. If I could not name the piece, he would tell me to start with the period, and once I figured that out, we would discuss the well-known composers of that time. Yet again my father would prompt me to identify the piece blaring out of the radio. Those experiences in the car always made me nervous; I never wanted to appear ignorant in front of my father. As I listened to Theo describe her love of music, I realized that I was experiencing that same feeling of nervousness; I did not want to seem ignorant and as Theo talked about music, I was particularly grateful for my father’s lessons. *End of interlude.*

Early Schooling

Theo's academic training started in the public school system in Swampscott, Massachusetts and in Hebrew school. As young children, Theo and her brother were good students and their teachers appreciated their seriousness:

We were both very smart, and very into going to school and wanting to learn, so you know, we always got really good reception from the teachers, and we could see the difference in how we were treated versus other people, how they were treated. You know, the teachers would all say, "Are there any more coming? Do you have any cousins?"

Surely this earnest interest in learning began at home where Theo and her brother immersed themselves in reading as a means of exploration.

Theo wrote about the origin of her love of reading in the Plymouth State alumni magazine:

I don't remember learning to read. I do remember sitting in first grade when I was barely six years old, being supremely bored with my workbook: "Circle the one that's different: apple, pear, banana, brick." I would race through these exercises and then do something fun: read. At home, my parents read to me and I read to my little brother. . . . There were all sorts of books and magazines in the house and I would read anything, even the cereal boxes at breakfast. (Kalikow, 1993a, p. 2)

Theo went on to describe her love affair with reading and how it developed as she grew and discovered new interests. By age 8 Theo had exhausted the children's room of the local library and moved on to the adult sections. She shared her passion for reading with Plymouth State readers to "help keep reading a live issue in [her] community." Theo used her story of

reading as metaphor for the meaning of a “sound community: one that is engaged in the continuing conversation with the past, the reflective conversation with the present, and the adventuring into the future” (Kalikow, 1993a, p. 2).

Reading was the vehicle through which Theo explored a variety of topics throughout her childhood. She developed an interest in science at a young age and was influenced by her eighth grade science teacher: “She was a very inspiring teacher, so I liked everything. I liked rocks and stars and chemistry and bugs and whatever there was.” She was further influenced by her high school chemistry teacher, and her interest in science continued. By age 15 Theo decided that she would go to college and then attend graduate school to obtain a Ph.D. in chemistry. However, at Wellesley her academic interests changed and led her down a path she would never have imagined in high school.

College

In her first semester at Wellesley, Theo was placed in an advanced chemistry class because she had scored very high on the standardized College Board exams. It was a horrible experience because the instructor was a bad teacher and the students did not know what was going on. Meanwhile Theo was in a philosophy class that she absolutely loved because the teacher was fabulous: “We wallowed in Plato and Aristotle and you know I thought philosophy was the cat’s pajamas.” Theo continued with philosophy and chemistry the second semester, and luckily her second chemistry course was better than the first, mainly due to the teacher: It was “qualitative chemistry and we had somebody who was very interested in atomic theory . . . I don’t know what the hell she was supposed to be teaching us, but she taught us all about atomic theory, and I was fascinated with that.”

Theo's college experience was influenced by the quality of teachers—good and bad—and she was moved by those who inspired her, just as she had been in secondary school:

I probably would have liked [chemistry] better if I'd had better teachers and if there had been a better social context as now all of the studies of women and science are telling us. I feel like an early example of what they didn't do right, but that's okay.

Wellesley is one of the Seven Sisters, which are known for their academic rigor and commitment to women. As a graduate of Mount Holyoke I thought that Theo and I would enjoy the shared experience of attending Seven Sisters institutions. Yet through Theo's description of her time at Wellesley, both in and out of the classroom, I realized that our experiences were dissimilar. I attended Mount Holyoke 30 years after Theo attended Wellesley and the differences in our experiences are striking. For example, when I was at Mount Holyoke the curriculum reflected what is known about how women learn, particularly in the sciences. Also, women were free to be themselves regardless of their sexual identities. Listening to Theo's stories reminded me that my college experience was shaped by the experiences of the women ahead of me—at Mount Holyoke, at the Seven Sisters, and in academia in general—and I am grateful for the manner in which Theo's generation has improved higher education for women in the generations that follow them.

At Wellesley Theo discovered that she was more interested in the humanities than chemistry, which had long been her great academic love. She wanted to be a philosophy major, but her father would not allow it:

My father hit the roof. He went bananas. . . . This was approximately 1960, so you can imagine what the general social attitudes were in 1960, but my father said, "You

are gonna have to grow up and earn your living, you better be a chemist because then you can always get a job. Who ever heard of philosophers ever getting a job?" And we had tremendous fights about this and I was mad at them for years. But I didn't want to not go to college, and I didn't want them to not pay, so I said okay, I'll major in chemistry, I'll do the least amount of work I can possibly get away with, and I'll take lots of philosophy classes.

Theo's father, unlike many of his contemporaries, did not view a woman's college education as preparation for marriage. He was concerned about his daughter's ability to earn a living and did not understand how majoring in the humanities would help ensure a comfortable future for her. Although the concern Theo's father expressed for her welfare stemmed from love, it represented a way of thinking that thwarted opportunity.

Theo learned how to work around the obstacle her father placed in her path. She continued her chemistry major while also exploring her newfound love of philosophy, which led her to discover the history of science:

History of science was even more fun than philosophy, or at least as much fun. Anyway, it was fascinating, and I knew enough science to be able to understand the science part. And that's when I really sort of discovered what I like best about academic work, and I'm thinking I didn't even like philosophy that much, you know, pure, by itself. What I really liked was the historical context of things, and finding out how ideas developed, and what the social influences were on concepts, and all that stuff. So it was fascinating. You know, I liked to say that I discovered I was more interested in metaphysics than I was physics, but it was actually more the social context of ideas.

Despite her new interest, Theo still could not convince her father that anything but a science major was appropriate. As a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Theo's father wanted her to major in "some kind of science that he could recognize." Many years later he came across some of Theo's old college textbooks and read them, including the literature and philosophy books. Theo described his reaction: "He said, 'You know I never understood it before, why you were interested in this stuff, but this stuff is really interesting!'"

Graduate School

After graduating from Wellesley in 1962, Theo moved to New York City. She found a job in a lab at Columbia Medical School after learning from an employment agency that her other choice was to work in a cosmetic factory. She described her decision as, "No contest. No lipstick factory for me!" Despite the fact that the lab was the more desirable working environment of her options, it was not a pleasant place to be:

It was a totally sexist environment. They had probably a hundred medical students every year and two women. And all the labs were run by women, but all the doctors were men persons, and when they wrote their research papers, guess whose names were on the research papers first, second, third, and fourth? All the men persons who never did any of the work.

Theo stayed with the lab for two years and while there she took advantage of Columbia's employee benefit of taking two courses per semester for free. She explored a variety of interests, including philosophy. One day Theo noticed a flier in the philosophy department announcing a new doctoral program in philosophy at MIT. She applied and was offered admission and left New York to return to Massachusetts in 1964.

At MIT it did not take long for Theo to realize that the philosophy program there was a bad fit for her:

Talk about a bad match. Holy Toledo. The philosophy department, which I thought would be all philosophy of science and cool stuff, was taken over by a bunch of British analytic philosophers, and I didn't really consider that to be philosophy, and I didn't like it, so I hung out with the historians of science and got in trouble.

Theo stayed at MIT for a few years, but it was not the right place for her. At the suggestion of her professors, she decided to write a thesis and graduate with a master's degree instead of completing the doctorate. She wrote the thesis long distance, however, because she left MIT to teach philosophy at the University of Exeter in England. When she returned to the United States one year later, she took a teaching job in the philosophy department at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth (UMass Dartmouth; then Southeastern Massachusetts University) and did not finish her master's degree until 1970.

Theo went on to pursue her doctorate in philosophy at Boston University (BU) while teaching full-time at UMass Dartmouth. She enjoyed her experience at BU much more than her time at MIT because "the philosophy department [at BU] was much better in terms of making a congenial environment and being open to eclectic points of view." At Wellesley Theo discovered that her academic interests spanned several disciplines, and unlike MIT, the program at BU allowed her the flexibility to further explore her interests. Bateson's (1989) comments about creative thinking reflect Theo's need to examine social contexts through a variety of lenses:

It also seems probable that the most creative thinking occurs at the meeting places of disciplines. At the center of any tradition, it is easy to become blind to alternatives. At

the edges, where lines are blurred, it is easier to imagine that the world might be different. Vision sometimes arises from confusion. (p. 73)

Theo's experience at BU was a refreshing change from her work at MIT where she disliked the culture of the department and had difficulty articulating her ideas in her thesis to meet the expectations and demands of her advisor, who she described as "a maniac perfectionist."

It took Theo less than four years to complete her doctorate, but her daily life was crazy as she juggled her teaching load, school, and her commute between Cambridge, where she lived, and Dartmouth, where she worked: "I taught, I came back, I went running, I went to the library . . . and I wrote." Theo wrote her dissertation on the history of Konrad Lorenz's theories of ethology, which is the science of animal instinctive behavior, and later published several articles on the topic in a variety of international journals (e.g., Kalikow 1975; 1976; 1980; 1983; 1987). Through the experience of researching Lorenz, Theo learned what it meant to be part of a scholarly community:

People would help. I would go say what I was doing, and somebody said, "Well you have to go to talk to Ernst Meyer." Well Ernst Meyer, is, you know, a monstrous guy in biology. He was at Harvard. "Talk to Stephen J. Gould. He's at Harvard. Go talk to him." I would go talk to these guys. They would be nice, they would be helpful, they would say, "Oh, here's this" and "Go do that" and you know, "Go write to so-and-so, he lives in Israel and he's doing this work" or "So-and-so's in Australia, you tell him I told you to be in touch." . . . it was great.

All of the scholars Theo mentioned were men and she said that all but one took her and her research seriously. The individual who discounted Theo wrote her a condescending letter in

response to her attempt to communicate with him, but otherwise she enjoyed the benefits of a vibrant scholarly community in which people supported each other.

Participation in her scholarly community sustained Theo throughout her career, especially given that she was not able to teach in her specialty at UMass Dartmouth:

Baby philosophy was what I taught, and logic, and introduction to history of science, which was quite fun, but, you know, I didn't ever hardly teach anything upper division. And it was okay . . . because I had a whole other scholarly life, which was good. I got to be in the field.

Unlike her colleagues at research universities, Theo's focus was on teaching. She does not regret the fact that her teaching career was spent at UMass Dartmouth or that her transition to administration prevented her from writing her culminating scholarly work like colleagues who spent their careers as faculty members. She has enjoyed the path she chose and learned a great deal about teaching and learning, and she continues to learn about teaching and learning to inform her work as a college president.

Teaching

UMass Dartmouth was unlike any of the institutions Theo had attended. In describing her transition to that campus it is clear that the college had a profound effect on her life as a teacher:

All of a sudden, there I was at this place, which was a public institution serving first-generation people, most of whom, or many of whom didn't even speak English as their first language. They were Portuguese speakers. A lot of them came to work on the whaling ships, and the fishing boats, and the textiles factories when they had those things there. . . . And so that was a whole 'nother world, as far as I was concerned . . .

for the first time I was dealing with a real mix of kids; ages, everything from traditional college aged to returning students; people who were ready to go to college, and prepared to go to college, but didn't have any money; people whose skills were all different levels. So it was very fascinating, and I kind of got bitten with the public education bug 'cause you could see that it was transforming their lives.

Theo felt lucky to have a job because academic appointments were few and far between in the late 1960s and early 1970s and she committed herself to teaching philosophy to the students at UMass Dartmouth. However, some of her colleagues never adjusted to UMass Dartmouth and thought that they deserved to be at more prestigious universities: "Some of them were miserable their whole careers. How can you be miserable for 20 years? Eek, bad."

Not only was Theo happy in her work and life, she wanted to make the educational experience at UMass Dartmouth good for the students. She was influenced by the woman in the philosophy department who hired her, Lura Teeter, who became her mentor. Lura and her husband, a chemistry professor, moved to UMass Dartmouth from a more prestigious institution because they were committed to helping students from underprivileged backgrounds gain access to college. Theo reflected:

If you were conscious, you couldn't help noticing that's who you were teaching. . . . The kids could do the work. They just needed to be given the confidence and the introduction to whatever it was. . . . I just sort of assumed that they would be able to do it, and a lot of them did, and it was a real eye opener to me about . . . another thing that college could be, not just where you went after your privileged suburban youth. . . . This was a whole 'nother way to be, and another important function for higher education which I never thought about before. What did I know? I was a student, I

was going to school, I was doing my thing. I wasn't thinking about the larger social context. But man, you know, the larger social context kind of hit you in the face.

Theo's willingness to acknowledge otherness and the difference in people's life experiences provided her the awareness she needed to become a good teacher in the context of that campus. She did not want to be like some of her colleagues who did not understand the students at UMass Dartmouth and as a result were "miserable, and bitter, and terrible. You know, they weren't good teachers either, a lot of them."

Theo described the great teachers in her life as inspirational and has spent her career trying to help students have good classroom experiences. It was exciting for her to teach students at UMass Dartmouth who were engaged in the course material and were excited about learning. Although teaching students who were not motivated in the classroom was frustrating, she worked hard to help them learn. She was not surprised by the exasperation, however, because she had witnessed her high school chemistry teacher and Hebrew school teacher struggle in such situations.

Although Theo first described her high school chemistry teacher as inspirational, she later mentioned that students were terrified of him. She reflected on the disjunction:

I was not terrified of him, you know, 'cause I knew why he was doing all this crazy stuff . . . chasing people around with . . . paddles to beat them and everything like that. What he really wanted was for people to learn, and he was doing anything he could think of . . . to get 'em to pay attention, or to understand.

Theo understood the chemistry teacher's behavior because she had a similar experience in Hebrew school:

We had a teacher who was from the old school. He barely spoke English, and here he was, poor, nice, learned man teaching all of us little schnooky kids Hebrew . . . it must have been frustrating as hell for him to teach a whole lotta bratty kids, you know, that might not have been that good of learners, or not that motivated to learn either. . . . I remember one time some of the kids played a trick on him. They got a plastic thing that looked like an ink blot and they put it on his book. And he went crazy. He screamed, he threw the ink bottle, he had a tantrum, and I'm sure they were amazed . . . it was probably just the thing that put him over the edge.

Those early examples helped Theo understand the frustrations and the joys of teaching, and she worked hard to help her students realize their potential and celebrate success in the classroom.

One example of Theo's ability to create a classroom environment that encouraged everyone to succeed was when she taught logic:

[I learned] not to terrify them, and to make sure that they had lots of little successes, and that they figured out they really could do this stuff. . . . They come in terrified. You give them a few symbols and they want to throw up and faint, so you have to take it really slow, and make sure they're all comin' along, and you don't lose any, and eventually they get a little confidence and they figure out how to do it.

That type of commitment to teaching takes a lot of work, but Theo wanted to be a good teacher. It was exciting for her when students fell in love with philosophy, and she still keeps in touch with some of the students she had in class 20 or 30 years ago.

Theo continues to be interested in pedagogy despite the fact that she is no longer in the classroom. She stays current with the literature on teaching and learning and continually

strives to help make the classroom environment at UMF conducive for all types of learners. This is also representative of Theo's continuing transformation as a scholar. Just as her father discovered new interests late in his life when he stumbled upon Theo's college textbooks, Theo continually engages in new scholarly pursuits. She commented that she "get[s] to be interested in everything eventually."

I find it noteworthy that as a college student, Theo "thought anything to do with any social science was, you know, a ridiculous crock." She later revised her ideas as a graduate student when she explored subjects that crossed boundaries. Thirty years later I am studying her as the topic of my dissertation with a social science lens informed by the humanities, for as Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2005) explained, "we see more deeply using two lenses" (p. 964). Perhaps the intermingling of our experiences and life paths is indicative of an overarching cycle of learning in which we, as a community of individuals, sustain for future generations through the sharing of our experiences. This is part of composing a life—in this case two lives, mine and Theo's—which as Bateson (1989) described "means integrating one's own commitments with the differences created by change and the differences that exist between the peoples of the world with whom we increasingly come into contact" (p. 59).

The Transformation of a Leader

Interaction with our environments, including the people around us, shapes the composition of our lives, and it is in that context that leadership occurs. Theo's leadership in her current position as college president has been informed by other leadership roles she has assumed throughout her life and by leadership she has witnessed. When speaking about herself as a leader, Theo makes it clear that she did not become a leader on her own. In

addition to seeking out opportunities for growth as an individual and a professional, she benefited from other people's interest in her and carries the nuggets of wisdom those individuals shared with her into each new day.

One of Theo's earliest memories of herself as a leader was during her summers as a counselor at her aunt's camp:

The kids would all get attracted [to me]. . . . Looking back on it now, I see that I expected them to do whatever it was, whether it was archery or swimming or whatever, and I was supportive, and I helped them do it. And so they learned and they got to be confident at whatever it was. And I was also very enthusiastic. I loved everything. And so that was being a good role model.

More than a decade later, as a professor at UMass Dartmouth, Theo used the same approach to leadership. The way in which she set high standards for her campers and her students and helped them achieve their goals is reminiscent of the manner in which she was raised. Her parents and other loved ones clearly had significant expectations of her and also provided the foundation for her to be successful. By the time Theo was a teenager she was modeling her parents' behavior in that regard, and it is a formula that has worked for her throughout her life. This skill is part of what Bernard M. Bass and Ronald M. Riggio (2006) identified as inspirational motivation, a component of transformational leadership: Leaders "create clearly communicated expectations that followers want to meet and also demonstrate commitment to goals and the shared vision" (p. 6).

Faculty Union President

Many years later Theo would draw on the skill of motivation for a very different purpose. While teaching at UMass Dartmouth, she was wooed by colleagues to serve on the

faculty union executive board. Soon thereafter she was elected president of the union and developed additional leadership skills in the midst of conflict on campus:

It was a completely insane place . . . they had the faculty fighting, they had a rapid expansion of the student body, they had consolidation onto the main campus from branch campuses in New Bedford and Fall River. So, there were all kinds of faculty culture issues, and governance issues, and fighting faculty issues.

The problems at UMass Dartmouth were heightened by the fact that the institution was recovering from the experience of having of a “crazy president” who physically assaulted people if they did not agree with him (and had recently left the institution). Furthermore, the faculty worked without a contract for several years due to administrative problems with the state. The overall campus climate improved with the arrival of a new president, and in the meantime Theo gained administrative leadership skills and garnered the respect of her colleagues.

Through her service as union president, Theo developed the leadership skills Bass and Riggio (2006) called idealized influence, another component of transformational leadership:

[These] leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them; leaders are endowed by their followers as having extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination. Thus, there are two aspects to idealized influence: the leader’s behaviors and the elements that are attributed to the leader by followers and other associates. (p. 6)

Theo’s faculty colleagues may not have wanted to emulate her in the strict sense of the word (imitation), but her passion for solving problems and holding other people accountable must

have been appreciated. The role of union president is not a glamorous job, but Theo used the experience as a learning opportunity and filled the role with gusto:

It was fascinating in a lot of different ways, and a big learning experience as well. . . . For one thing, I had an executive board to deal with, you know, other faculty members. We had to hammer out positions about negotiating . . . about the contract language. . . . And then of course there was negotiating with the administration, which was a whole new thing, to deal with a state-wide faculty union . . . staying up in the middle of the night, and screeching at the president and the administration, and trying to hammer out things that we could agree on . . . I enjoyed it a lot, probably a lot more than I should've.

Theo's involvement with the union allowed her the opportunity to work with faculty members from a variety of disciplines and develop an understanding of their different perspectives. Furthermore, she gained a broader view of the institution than her regular routine as a faculty member would have allowed.

One particular experience with the UMass Dartmouth faculty union stands out in Theo's memory as noteworthy:

There was three or four years there where we didn't get any raise of any kind 'cause the state hadn't figured out what to do about collective bargaining, and so they never gave us any money. But finally they gave us money, and um, the junior faculty had been really strapped . . . they were hiring faculty in those days for \$10,000 a year . . . [it was] the early 70s which was already not a lot of money, and so when we finally got some money in the sort of mid- to late-70s we figured out a way to give it all to the junior faculty on some kind of reverse sliding scale. The senior faculty were

ripshit, they were so mad! But we did it anyway . . . actually there were some senior faculty who thought it was a good thing. And the guy that invented the way we did it was a senior faculty member and economist who was a very persuasive arguer. He was a Quaker also, and you know, sort of had immense moral stature with the faculty . . . and said that this was the thing we had to do. And the administration didn't care . . . they were ready to let us implode on our own.

This further reflects the idealized influence portion of transformational leadership: "Leaders who have a great deal of idealized influence are willing to take risks and are consistent rather than arbitrary. They can be counted on to do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6).

It is interesting that Theo did not take credit for the idea of giving extra money to the junior faculty, and it may not have been her idea. She talked about "we" and gives credit to her colleague who insisted that it was the right thing to do. As union president, Theo managed the successful implementation of that process and stood her ground with angry faculty members, but did not describe her work with phrases such as "I led," or "with my leadership, we did this . . ." Theo is what Bass and Riggio (2006) described as an authentic transformational (and therefore charismatic) leader because her leadership is predominantly socialized, which is signified by "egalitarian behavior, serve[ing] collective interests, and develop[ing] and empower[ing] others" (p. 13). This is in contrast to predominantly personalized leadership, in which the leader is focused primarily on her authority and tends to manipulate other people.

Theo did not mind taking risks as union president, but as the first woman in that role at UMass Dartmouth, it is likely that she was scrutinized more than her male predecessors.

As Bensimon and Marshall (1997) explained, “the relationships between men and women at the department and institutional levels create different socialization experiences for women and men” (p. 14). Theo recognized these differences, but was true to her convictions and did not stray from the path to which she was committed:

[I was] young and dumb. You know, I was a feminist. I figured I could do this stuff and they would just have to accept it. Of course they didn’t like it. Boy, one of the guys from the engineering college was on the negotiating team—we put him on so that that group would have a voice at the negotiating sessions—and at one session he kept contradicting what the union position was. So I told him once; he did it again; I threw him off.

In her role as union president Theo was helping to transform UMass Dartmouth. Although Bensimon and Marshall described critical feminist policy analysis at the theoretical level, Theo exhibited two of its key components as an individual by “problematiz[ing] taken-for-granted practices” and by being “openly political and change-oriented” (p. 10). Such principles have informed Theo’s life and she has not wavered from her commitment to improving academia. Also, she demonstrated what Bass and Riggio (2006) outlined as the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership: “Transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways” (p. 7).

Don Walker and the Value of Mentoring

Theo’s leadership with the faculty union and in the philosophy department at UMass Dartmouth garnered the attention of the university president, Don Walker, who invited her to serve as one of his executive assistants. When Don approached Theo about working with

him, she was about 40 years old, had enjoyed a fun teaching career, served as department chair, held several roles on the union executive board, achieved the rank of full professor, published actively in her field, received a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), and “blah blah blah” (Theo’s words for the haughty manner in which academics list their accomplishments). Don’s offer was appealing to Theo, and she went to her father for advice about this potentially significant career move: “My dad had a proverb that he trotted out for this occasion. And the proverb is ‘Grab fortune by the forelocks; she is bald behind.’” Her father’s words reminded Theo to view Don’s offer as an opportunity—one that she may not have in the future.

Theo did not receive support from everyone in the UMass Dartmouth community when she moved to the president’s office. Her faculty colleagues thought she had “gone to hell” by becoming an administrator. She understood their perspective, but with the move she also realized that “faculty are basically, essentially lonesome and miserable because they’re always working by themselves.” Theo enjoyed the interaction and camaraderie in her administrative office:

I discovered I had a work family. I loved my work family . . . we were a team, and we had such fun. . . . I discovered that that was the way to make change, is to get a little team together and start doing stuff and make friends.

Theo was eager to make change and help the institution be the best it could be, poetically walking the walk of feminist critical policy analysis (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). In describing her experience in the president’s office, Theo spoke of teamwork, used the word “we” instead of “I,” and talked about the meaning of her relationships with her colleagues.

The closest bond Theo created in the president's office was with Don, the president, who became her most important mentor. Theo wove stories about Don and his teachings throughout all of our conversations; it is clear that he had a tremendous impact on her life, personally and professionally. It has been more than 25 years since Theo left her faculty position to work with Don and she has gained perspective on their influence on each other: "I think [Don] was a leader pretty much like me, except I think in some ways he was better than I am, and in some other ways I'm better than he is. But he had the same sort of style."

In reflecting on the fact that her primary mentor was a man, Theo acknowledged the gender differences inherent in leadership:

I suspect that most of it is due to socialization . . . conditioned differences. You know, if you're socialized as a female in this society, you're almost bound to have talents that most men don't have because they didn't need to develop them . . . if you're sort of operating from a subservient position a lot of your life, you develop some kind of ability with social cues and other stuff that men persons don't have to develop, and you maybe get a little bit more empathy and so on, because you have to look at things from more than one point of view in order to even survive. But, you know, I've seen women be a very different kind of leader from me and men be more like or more unlike. I don't think it matters. I think it's just a question of you know, the individual person, but you know, the feminist stuff is important . . . the fact is I think I pay more attention to women in terms of making sure they have the leadership development that they need.

Instead of treating successful leadership as the same experience for women and men, Theo's analysis addressed difference, another key component of feminist critical policy analysis

(Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). Gender-based inequities in the work environment prompted Theo to formally dedicate herself to the professional development of women—a commitment she has fulfilled in a variety of ways in all of her professional positions, including the creation of a management institute for women in higher education in Maine.

Theo mentors several of her colleagues at UMF on an informal basis. She is very much committed to providing opportunities for people to grow in order to reach their full potential. For example, Theo promoted one woman to president's council because "she's a smart bunny" who, while being groomed for senior administration, adds tremendous value to Theo's core group of advisors. Theo spoke of another woman on president's council with whom she enjoys a mutual mentoring relationship: "She tells me what to do and we talk about it." Theo's emphasis on professional development speaks to the individualized consideration component of transformational leadership because she "pay[s] special attention to each follower's needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 7).

Theo's sensitivity to other people's needs for leadership development stems from Don Walker's attention to her leadership development. Theo identified several nuggets of learning Don shared with her that inform her work every day. She also commented that even though she has learned something once, she may need to learn it again, or learn it in a different context, and that she learns or relearns something every day. As a result, all of her learning is dynamic, and as she benefits from new lessons she is also reformulating the lessons she tucked away and learning from them in new ways.

Humility

Theo is a very humble person by nature. In fact, in her role as college president, she actually seems to blend in with other people on campus. During my first day at UMF Theo took me to lunch at the dining hall in the student center. As we scurried across campus bundled in our winter gear, many people said, “Hi, Theo”; I never heard anyone refer to her as “President Kalikow” while I was there. When Theo and I arrived at the student center, we stopped by one of the student activities offices and left our coats on a coat rack so we did not have to drag them into the dining hall. As we stood in the dining hall line to pay and the next line to get our food, Theo greeted people floating about the room, and no one stopped his or her activities to provide her with special attention. After I loaded my tray with food I found Theo as she was asking a student sitting by himself if we could join him. I introduced myself to the student, and then Theo said to him, “I’m Theo, but you probably know that.” The student chuckled, but did not seem surprised that the president was sitting at his table. The three of us enjoyed a nice conversation, and when it was time to leave, we all cleared our own dishes.

Theo is incredibly low-maintenance, at least when compared to what I think of as the stereotypical president. She does her own grocery shopping and cooking; she and Deb clean their house; and she drives herself all over the place, including the airport in Portland and out-of-state meetings. One evening I joined Theo and Deb at a dinner for first-year students who were recognized for achieving high grades during the fall semester. The servers were attentive to Theo, but not overly so. At the end of the meal they brought her a cup of tea. I asked if she drinks tea every evening, and she replied that she does not, but when she became president she had to come up with some way for the servers to pay attention to her because it

made them very nervous that she did not have specific service requirements. Theo clearly has no desire for people to flutter about her, waiting to meet her every need, but she also appreciates other people's efforts to make her comfortable. When we left the event, Theo popped into the kitchen to tell the chef and kitchen staff that the dinner was lovely. As I left campus that evening I was struck by Theo's graciousness; like so many of the other people who work at UMF, she is simply a kind woman who is trying to do her job to the best of her abilities and enjoys relationships with her colleagues

Theo first realized the phenomenon of others people's behavior around high-profile leaders when she became interim president of Plymouth State College (now Plymouth State University) in New Hampshire:

One day I'm the dean, and the next day I'm the president, and all of a sudden people are paying attention to me. Downtown and everything . . . I walked into the bank where I had a checking account for, you know, six years and "Ah! It's the president!"

Theo tells such stories with a great deal of humor and she knows that people are in awe of her position, not of her as a person. Her perspective is informed by Don's comments about how to behave in such situations:

[Don said,] "Don't think it's you. It is not you. It is the position. Don't ever think that you're as good as they're treating you, because you're not." He also said, "Be thankful that they are and remember you can capitalize on the respect that comes with the position. But don't think it's 'cause of your pretty blue eyes, because it isn't."

Although Theo is committed to her role as president and feels passionately about UMF and its success, she does not have a need to identify her professional role in every situation. I experienced Theo's humility first-hand one afternoon while cross-country skiing

with her and Deb in Carrabassett Valley, about one hour north of Farmington. It was a cold, windy day and after successfully climbing a hill on our skis, we stopped at a warming hut along the trail. Soon after we arrived, a man came in and joined us in front of the woodstove. He engaged us in conversation and when he realized that Theo and Deb were from Farmington, he asked if they teach at UMF. Theo responded with a simple “yes” and the man offered nice comments about the University. Theo and Deb smiled and nodded their heads in agreement. As Theo, Deb, and I left the warming hut and headed back to the trails, I was struck by how neat that interaction was, how humble Theo and Deb are, and what a privilege it was for me to spend time with them.

The next day I asked Theo about her conversation with the man in the ski hut. I commented that most other presidents would have answered his question about teaching at the university by saying, “No, I am the president.” Theo reflected on her behavior in that type of situation: “I don’t have any need [to identify myself as president]. Sometimes I do just to forestall them from putting their foot in their mouth and becoming embarrassed, but I didn’t see the need to do it with this guy.” It is interesting that when Theo identifies herself, it is not because she wants to be acknowledged for her role; rather, she does not want others to be uncomfortable. Although this is an example of Theo’s humility, it also speaks to the fact that her role as president of UMF is not her only identity. That day she was Theo the skier, enjoying time outdoors, proclaiming her love of zipping down hills, and embracing splendid views of Sugarloaf Mountain. It was a day I will remember as skiing with Theo and Deb, not simply as skiing with the president and her partner.

Symbolism

People's needs to gush over a college president are tied to their desires for the president to notice them. Theo learned about the symbolic value of a president's attention from Don: "I didn't necessarily know it my own self. Left to myself, I'd probably be in a room reading a book, but you know, people like it." The most prominent way Theo pays attention to the UMF campus in general is by being visible. She walks from her house to her office every morning, and she frequently goes home for lunch. Her treks across campus are symbolic in that she is a fixture of everyday life on campus, and she usually stops to talk to other people: "Like today, when I walked over here the guys were shoveling . . . and I talked to them about shoveling, and [the] Super Bowl."

Theo attends the meetings and events that are required in her position, but she also goes to concerts and movies on campus for her own enjoyment. She clearly finds pleasure in her life as part of the UMF community. Theo also acknowledges her colleagues on an individual level. For instance, when she sees an article that may be of interest to a faculty member, she forwards it to the person with a note. Theo also sends handwritten birthday cards to all employees at UMF. She started the tradition when she was a dean at the University of Northern Colorado:

I write the same thing I have always written, which is "Best wishes for a very happy birthday." . . . I just write inside, and write their name on the envelope, and I send it. And I write them and they get sent out every Friday, and here [at UMF] I've been sending notes . . . to alumni, too. . . . It sounds whacky, but for some people it's the only birthday card they get. I didn't realize that until somebody said, "Oh thank you

for my card. Yours is the only one I got.” . . . It just sort of made me more determined to send birthday cards.

Theo thinks it is important to recognize her colleagues during troubled times as well. She sends notes to people when they are ill or when their loved ones are ill, for example. Theo explained that “I try to keep in touch with people . . . it’s a small enough place so that you have to be approachable, and you have to try to relate to people.”

I asked Theo if people treat her the same way in return—if they offer support when she is going through a rough time. She said that usually people do not say much:

Hardly anybody ever does that. On the other hand, everybody is just kind of naturally sort of considerate of each other. You know, we see each other, and people always ask how you are, and a lot of it is routine, but on the other hand, I think they kind of mean it in the New England way. Not to be too intrusive or anything like that. So it’s an odd thing.

As a New Englander I can relate to the culture about which Theo spoke. It does not mean that people do not care about others, but they do not want to invade people’s privacy. This phenomenon seems to be more prominent around public figures; people on campus are probably more hesitant around Theo simply due to the power dynamics inherent in her position even though her behavior is not affected by those dynamics.

The UMF community was not shy about celebrating Theo’s 60th birthday, however. Several members of her work family organized a campus-wide surprise party for her, which was a success in and of itself since it is very difficult to keep secrets from Theo, especially related to UMF. Theo described the party: “Everybody came dressed like me. Chinos and a shirt and red neckerchief and a baseball cap and running shoes. It was cool. . . . It was fun. It

was a riot.” Even though it had been five years since the party, several people told me about it when I visited, and they all talked about it with great enthusiasm. Birthdays are important in Theo’s immediate work family—the people in her office suite, which includes the provost and his assistant—and they celebrate everyone’s birthdays: “So the deal is that we get taken out to lunch and the other ones pay. That’s always the deal; the birthday critter doesn’t have to pay.”

Listening

Theo is deliberate in her attempts to relate to people, and listening is of paramount importance in her quest to build relationships and do her job well. She explained that “people need to be listened to a lot, especially in administration . . . because by the time they get to you, wherever you are, they’re probably feeling wrangely because nobody’s listened to them yet.” Don taught Theo that people simply want to be heard, and feeling as though a leader has truly listened to them is more important than having the leader agree with them. Theo has learned that if she listens to others and then explains her decisions, even people who disagree with her are less likely to be angry because she has been very clear about her process.

In turn, Theo said that listening to others’ perspectives has saved her from making poor decisions. For example, a few years ago she considered hiring a vice president for technology or chief information officer:

I didn’t really know, so we had a fishbowl. . . . You make a series of concentric circles. You have the fish in the middle, and the fish are empowered to talk first about an issue, and then everybody else sits and be the bowl, and after the fish have talked, then the bowl gets to talk. And so I collected a bunch of fish from different points of view about should there be a chief information officer? Should there be something in

faculty development? Should there be somethin' else? You know, three or four different people all talked, and then the bowl all talked. And it became very clear that the consensus was that we should not get a chief information officer; what we needed was a faculty development person who knew about technology and who could help the faculty implement the technology. So that's what we did, and everybody was so surprised that, you know, I had actually listened and done what they said that they sort of couldn't get over it. But that set a standard, you know, now I have to listen to 'em.

Theo explained that if she does not listen to others, she does not learn what she needs to know to be successful in her position. She has created a community of trust because she is true to her word, and her informal style encourages people to tell her what they honestly think. As a result, Theo said that people feel empowered: "They say 'You're full of shit!' It has saved me a lot of time . . . [because I don't] do stupid things . . . I'm sure that has saved my rear end many times."

Theo reflected that the additional benefit to listening is that it helps a community reach consensus, which Don taught her is a key to getting things done on campus. She shared that if she listens to people when they tell her not to do something, then they trust her when she makes decisions and are more likely to support those decisions. However, Theo does not strive for consensus as described by Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), who stated that "consensus often erases difference" (p. 968). Instead she looks for the type of consensus that develops after all perspectives have been heard—a consensus of respect, not a consensus of homogeneity. In fact, Theo values debate. In describing a former member of the UMF community she disliked because he did nothing to contribute to campus she said, "the guy

was a blob . . . it's not that he was a vocal opponent of the administration or anything as desirable as that." Theo expects people at UMF to be engaged, but does not insist or even want that engagement to translate into agreement with her.

Leah's Interlude: The Privilege of Listening. In reflecting on the role of listening in Theo's approach to leadership, I realized that it was a great privilege to have the opportunity to listen to her during our one-on-one interviews. In our first session, Theo commented that "usually, if this were a normal encounter, I'd be asking you [Leah] everything and you'd be telling me everything." Theo did not talk to me as though she were a very important person who could teach me, the novice, a lot; rather, she simply opened herself up to me and the experience of being in my study. As a result, I truly felt comfortable listening. *End of interlude.*

Thinking Strategically

Theo's ideas about the ways organizations should function are rooted in Don's teachings. When she started working for Don she had considerable professional experience, but he challenged her to expand her thinking:

I had the foundation, but what Don was especially good at was sort of making you aware of the context, and how the behaviors or the reactions were gonna be, and what you could do next. And I'm not sure that I had ever started to thinking strategically like that . . . I thought strategically about how to do my teaching . . . and how to make conditions so that the kids would learn . . . but I didn't think to do it maybe on the next level. Or I wasn't doing it well, that's for sure.

The experience Theo gained in Don's office helped her understand that the way she behaved earlier in her career was not the most effective way to be a team member. For example, at

faculty meetings she used to make her colleagues angry, but did not know why. “I finally learned to shut up. Shut up!” She has since learned when to use different approaches to purposefully cause a stir among her colleagues: “I can still do that at the system presidents meeting, but you know, I’m sort of more doin’ it on purpose, mostly.” Theo has used her understanding of organizations to work for change, recognizing how to think strategically and transform institutions, a key component of feminist critical policy analysis (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997).

Don also encouraged Theo to think strategically about her career and apply for an American Council on Education (ACE) fellowship. She chose Brown University as her fellowship site so that she did not have to move and could commute from Cambridge, Massachusetts to Providence, Rhode Island. Furthermore, she wanted to gain exposure to a different type of institution, and as an ivy league school, Brown was about as far from the UMass Dartmouth atmosphere as she could get. Theo was fascinated by the culture at Brown:

I actually did one or two things, but basically I wandered around and I watched. . . . I saw a different environment, you know, because I thought that you did everything the way you did at Southeastern Mass [UMass Dartmouth], because that’s the only environment I really knew . . . that was really a learning experience. It was great.

ACE fellows are supposed to return to their employers at the end of their fellowships. Theo chose not to return to UMass Dartmouth, however, because she was ready for something new and Don was leaving the presidency. Instead her path took an unexpected geographic turn and she went to the University of Northern Colorado as dean of arts and sciences. From there she went to Plymouth State as a chief academic officer, where she also served as interim

president, and then she found her way to UMF as president. Theo's journey has been informed by Don's teachings at every step: "[He had] great teaching tools, stuff you remember forever because it gets in your head."

Leadership Style

One of Don Walker's comments that is a favorite of Theo and has particular relevance in her role as president is "flattery is like perfume—you can smell it, but don't drink it." Don's words reflect Theo's outlook in general as well as her leadership style, which is very informal. She does not have an arrogant demeanor. The first indication of her style is her appearance; her usual work attire when I visited included khakis, plaid button-down shirts, and polar fleece vests. When the system chancellor visited campus Theo was slightly more dressed up, but not significantly. She explained the role of her appearance as part of her leadership:

You know, when I go off campus I can dress up and wear the girl shoes and all that shit; I hate it, but I can do it. But I deliberately don't do it on campus because I don't want to seem unapproachable or somebody who is not gonna pay attention or somebody who's not in their league, whatever their league is, you know.

Theo's interpersonal skills are equally informal. I asked her if her informality is purposeful; she described how it suits her and helps her do her job well:

People just have to get used to it. But then they like it, 'cause, you know, there are a lot of stuffed shirts in academia, and a lot of pompous asses, and when they find somebody who isn't, after they get over the shock, they kind of like it 'cause they don't have to wonder about where they stand or what the issues are or how I feel

about it or anything. And it takes a big weight off their minds, and they can just concentrate on doing what they're supposed to do, which I realize is a shock.

Theo is not the kind of leader who basks in the glory and power of her position. Instead she focuses on teamwork, hires good people, and trusts that her colleagues are doing their jobs to the best of their abilities. Part of her success is that she is able to garner support for her goals while allowing people to work autonomously, further embodying the inspirational motivation factor of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Another key to Theo's leadership style is to be very clear about her expectations. She contrasted her style with the type of president who keeps everyone guessing about what she wants, yet still demands that people meet her expectations:

That's so tiring, and it's so counterproductive, and it's ridiculous! So don't do it. And how do you do your real job, and how do you think well, and how do you solve problems for the institution if you're worrying about pandering to some idiot! And so. And it's bad for people too, you know, it's stressful on them. And it's enough stress to do your job and have a life without having to worry about some asshole.

Theo clearly cares about the people with whom she works and wants them to be successful, and as a result further embodies the individualized consideration component of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

As noted above, Theo is direct in every conversation, with everyone. She is consistently Theo—she does not offer different versions of herself to different people. In fact, when Theo interviews for jobs, she is sure to be herself to help prospective employers figure out if she is a good fit:

On search behavior, I try to be as much me as I can be, and then some, because I figure they have to know what they're gonna get. And they [UMF community members] didn't run away screaming into the woods, so I figured it was a good match.

Theo's former assistant, Dona Whittemore, shared one poignant example of how Theo is direct in communicating her expectations:

[The] following is the last paragraph of a letter to a student concerning academic dismissal it is sooooo Theo I decided it should be in this booklet. The letter ended like this: Good luck in your studies. You are getting a second chance. There won't be a third. Sincerely yours, Theo. (Whittemore, n.d., p. 27)

Theo noted that there is a drawback to her direct nature, however. If people are not comfortable or familiar with Theo's style, they may be offended by it: "What I need to be sure about is that they don't misconstrue it as personal attack because I don't care to personally attack anybody." Theo's awareness of other individuals' feelings helps to balance her feistiness so that her work is as productive as possible.

Another key to Theo's successful management style is that she is incredibly efficient. She is warm in her conversations and welcomes people who want or need to talk with her, but she frames her day so as not to waste time. She leaves the office to go home at 4:30 p.m. when her schedule allows. Dona Whittemore described Theo's time management skills as one of her "greatest strengths" and offered an example to illustrate her point:

If she [Theo] is giving a reception or a party, and it's scheduled from 1:00-5:00 PM, at precisely 5:00 PM she will smile and say "Okay, time to go now, party's over, out, out, out!" Everyone smiles, says thank you, it was a nice party, and leaves. No

problem! I don't know anyone else who could do this and still have people look forward to their parties. (Whittemore, n.d., p. 25)

I experienced the same feeling during our interviews. When our allotted time was over, Theo would say, "Now I kick you out!" I respected her time—and was certainly most appreciative of it—and left her office each time eager to return for our next conversation. Theo's ability to manage her time well is significant because she is able to separate her work and home lives, yet still gets her work done and invests in relationships with her work family.

Transformation of UMF

UMF has garnered national attention in recent years, including commendable rankings in *US News and World Report* and inclusion in the Project DEEP study (Kuh et al., 2005). Theo's primary concern is the quality of education provided to UMF students and the realities of their experiences, but she acknowledges that such attention is important to the institution and the University of Maine System:

It's the reason we have a reputation, and it's the reason everybody knows who Farmington is Hell, it's why you're [Leah] here We got in *Fly Rod and Reel*, and that makes some people thrilled. And you know, that stuff is important because even if most people can't articulate why it is, it's important 'cause it's an outside affirmation. You know, you can toot your own horn all you want, and they expect the president to do that, so they don't pay any attention to that. But if you can say, "Well, nine years in a row *US News and World Report*" or "the DEEP report" or "the this and the that," they have to say, "Oh yeah, you're not just saying it, it must be true." I don't know if the hell it's true, you know, it's ridiculous, but it could be lots of other

places that could have just as good a reputation as we have, but it happens to be us, so hooray, let's use it.

Theo understands the value of capitalizing on the respect that results from that type of attention. Yet she does not highlight public accolades as a sign that her job is done or that UMF has reached its potential. She continually strives to make UMF a better place and knows what she wants to do next (e.g., manage a successful transition to a four-credit curriculum), in the near future (e.g., foster community and state-level relationships to partner in building a community arts center), and further down the road (e.g., renovate the recreation center).

In 2002 Theo was inducted into the Maine Women's Hall of Fame for her commitment to women in the state. Yet the honor reflected her commitment to all people in Maine and to the state's higher education system. One of Theo's close advisors and a member of her president's council, Valerie Huebner, offered remarks about Theo at the induction ceremony. Instead of focusing on Theo's achievements, Valerie described how Theo is as a person because "listing Theo's accomplishments wouldn't do justice to a deeper truth about how she has managed to be so successful" (Huebner, 2002, p. 2). Valerie shared some of Theo's secrets to success as a college president, including hiring good people and supporting them while holding them accountable. She also described the type of environment Theo fosters, one of "calm productivity" in which she and her colleagues "turn out [a] tremendous amount of work but don't waste time and energy in worry-mode or crisis-mode or protect-yourself mode" (Huebner, p. 2). Furthermore, Theo celebrates the creativity and innovation her colleagues bring to the table and clearly articulates her visions for UMF, whether they are small, easily attainable goals or long-term plans. Valerie summed up Theo's

commitment to UMF and leadership of its transformation: “She’s committed to making a small, rural, state university in Maine outstanding in every way, even on an extremely tight budget, and she uses her prodigious intelligence in the service of this goal” (Huebner, p. 2).

Theo’s acceptance speech at her induction into the Maine Women’s Hall of Fame mirrored her humility, her commitment to improving the human condition in general and higher education specifically, and her view of herself as a team member. Her speech was sprinkled with phrases that represent her learning (e.g., “I had a new view of the world”), her role as a community member (e.g., “we are not done”), and her humility (e.g., “it is a great thrill to be deemed worthy of [my predecessors’] company” (Kalikow, 2002, pp. 1-5). And like all of Theo’s speeches and most of her conversations, her remarks were funny. Before launching into her comments about women’s issues, Theo thanked her loved ones, the sponsors of the event, and those who nominated her, and reflected that “it’s always nice to find out what people think of you before you’re dead” (Kalikow, 2002, p. 1).

Although positions of leadership have provided Theo with the ability to foster change in academia, she recognizes that the kudos she has received do not truly matter in her work:

[When] you get an administrative job, you might as well not have a resume ‘cause nobody gives a shit about your academic accomplishments or your awards or anything like that. This is true. It’s not bad, you know, ‘cause what they’re dealing with is you and the decisions you make every day and who you are right now, you know, not your 15 pound academic resume. Hell with it!

Theo commented that this reality becomes more ingrained the longer a person is an administrator and the higher he or she moves up in administrative ranks. Luckily, it fits her leadership style. Theo is not one to emphasize her professional or academic

accomplishments; during my time with her I heard far more about her athletic prowess than specific work-related triumphs.

Yet there are times when Theo needs to remind the faculty at UMF that she was once a faculty member, too, and can relate to their plight. It is not important for the faculty to identify with her experience; rather, it is necessary that Theo, as president, understand them:

Being a faculty member is always a qualification for these jobs [presidencies], but it's not because of anything you actually do in your job. It's because that way, you sort of should have an appreciation for what they're doing, but that can always be trumped in their minds by the fact that you're not doing it and you're making decisions about their lives that really require you to have been a faculty member, but you're not a faculty member now, and you're not gonna please them all. . . . In some deep sense it's okay. I always tell people, you know, the faculty are what makes us different from a crummy resort. If we didn't have the academic program here . . . there would be no reason for us to exist, and the faculty make that happen. And so you know all the bitching and moaning and howling and screeching that we do about them . . . we still can't forget the fact that they're why we have a university at all, and the kids come.

Theo's vision for UMF is for it to become a true public liberal arts college, not just one in name. Her mission is not easy, particularly since UMF is in the only liberal arts institution in the State of Maine System. Yet she has been committed to public education since she started her academic career at UMass Dartmouth, and her passion has not wavered. At her inauguration to the UMF presidency, Theo outlined the future for UMF and referred to what "we" are going to do, not what "I am going to do" (Kalikow, 1995b). She ended her speech with an explanation of her role as leader and invitation for everyone in the community:

Presidents don't do anything, you know, they just create the conditions under which everybody else works their tails off. Some of my former administrative accomplices will recognize that this is not new for Theo and her gang. However, at least, I don't work on the standard Sgt. Preston of the Yukon model, where only the lead dog gets a change in view. I am trying to make sure that everybody can see where we're going, and help to get us there. So, I invite you all to join in, finding the way together.

(Kalikow, 1995b, p. 8)

The Journey of Representation

As a leader, Theo is working with her colleagues to help UMF find its way.

Spending time with Theo and other members of the UMF community had a huge impact on me and my journey as a woman and a scholar. I wish that I could share all of Theo's stories, jokes, and reflections in this paper; instead I have focused on the material that most closely addressed the research questions that framed this study.

Theo's willingness to share herself—and to not be anonymous—is remarkable and is clearly part of her commitment to women in academia. Theo is happy if her story can help inform others' experiences; she would be the first person to say that there is no right or wrong way to approach a career like hers, but there are certainly helpful tidbits that can inform people's journeys.

There is no one way to describe Theo or her leadership. As Valerie Huebner (2002) reflected, "I can't offer Theo as an example of any particular kind of leadership. She's an original" (p. 3). If Theo fit into one particular mold, it may have been easier to make sense of her story. That is not to say that engaging in this study was painful or grueling; rather it was a challenge that turned out to be a great deal of fun. Theo is a transformational leader. She is a

feminist. Yet these two descriptors are not the only ways to describe Theo and her work. Theo has offered to share her story—through me—to help enlighten others about the experiences of women college presidents.

I hope that readers resonate with this account of Theo's story and that it meets the criteria demanded by Ellis (1997):

A story's "validity" can be judged by whether it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is authentic and lifelike, believable and possible; the story's generalizability can be judged by whether it speaks to readers about their experience. (p. 133)

Ellis' use of the word "validity" is offset by quotation marks, noting the danger in attempting to verify an individual's story. Perhaps a better word is "crystallization," as described by Richardson and St. Pierre (2005):

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose. . . . Crystallization . . . deconstructs the traditional idea of "validity"; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. (p. 963)

The point of this study was not to be a complete representation of Theo or even a full description of her leadership experiences. Rather, it was to simply learn more about her experiences. In doing so Theo and I were composing a life:

The process of improvisation that goes into composing a life is compounded in the process of remembering a life, like a patchwork quilt in a watercolor painting, ruffled and evocative. Yet it is this second process, composing a life through

memory as well as through day-to-day choices, that seems to me most essential to creative living. The past empowers the present, and the groping footsteps leading to this present mark the pathways to the future. (Bateson, 1989, p. 34)

The process Bateson described is how I have made meaning of Theo's story, and I found that for me, "writing is a method of inquiry" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 971).

This study focused on Theo's life, but it has shaped my life as well. This journey started in late 2005 when Theo e-mailed me to express her interest in my study: "Hi Leah, got your letter. I'm happy to participate in your study. All my contact information is below. . . . do be in touch so we can set up a time to talk. Best—Theo" (personal communication, November 17, 2005). When I read her message I was at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) conference in Philadelphia. I was so excited to hear from Theo that I danced through the hallways with a big grin on my face to find my professors and friends and share the news. I knew that my study would be enlightening, but I had no idea how much fun I would have, and how moved I would be by the way I was welcomed by Theo and her colleagues. I am humbled that these individuals shared themselves with me and are invested in my study. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) commented that "none of us knows his or her final destination, but all of us can know about the shape makers of our lives that we choose to confront, embrace, or ignore" (p. 967). Members of the UMF community have become part of my community of shape makers and my learning as a result of this study will be forever present in the crystallization of my story.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

Whatever beauty or poetry is to be found in my little book is owing to your interest and encouragement of all my efforts from the first to the last; and if ever I do anything to be proud of, my greatest happiness will be that I can thank you for that, as I may do for all the good there is in me, and I shall be content to write if it gives you pleasure.

Louisa May Alcott, excerpt from a letter to her mother, 1854
cited in Wyse, 1997, p. 63

In early May 2006 I spent part of a warm, sunny afternoon sitting by a reflecting pool in Seattle. A mother duck and her 13 babies were busy swimming and exploring; the mother had nested in a grassy area in the middle of the pool and she was teaching her ducklings how to navigate their world. Once in a while the mother duck would flap her wings and squawk, but mostly she watched her children and made sure they were following her. Suddenly I was overwhelmed with memories of visiting Boston Public Garden as a child, where my sister, Hannah, and I loved riding the swan boats and visiting the setting of *Make Way for Ducklings* (McCloskey, 1941). I called Hannah while at the reflecting pool to tell her about the cute duck family and reminisce about our childhood. Talking with my sister made me smile, and I noticed that everyone around me was smiling as they watched the ducklings glide through the pool.

Despite the tranquility of the reflecting pool, the ducks were not safe there. Large, black birds were perched on a nearby roof and the people around me talked about how easy it is for winged predators to swoop in and fly off with ducklings in their mouths. I realized that the mother duck was trying to get her babies out of the pool, but each time she jumped on to the ledge only 3 of the 13 ducklings were strong enough to follow her. Finally someone came with a slab of concrete and created a plank for the ducks to walk out of the pool; presumably

the mother duck led her family to a safer location. Although she carried herself with grace and beauty and did not seem flustered, it was clear that the mother duck was working very hard to take care of her family.

Later that day it struck me that in simple terms, Theo is like a mother duck. She cares deeply for the members of her community and wants everyone to be successful and safe. Theo flaps her wings and squawks when she needs to, but mostly she exhibits grace and calm while navigating a path of exploration. Unlike a mother duck, Theo does not walk at the front of the line with others following her one-by-one. However, she works very hard to ensure that the people around her—including her immediate work family, the UMF community, and her presidential colleagues in the University of Maine System—move in the same direction in order to achieve their shared goals.

Theo's Place Among Leaders

This study informs the literature on women college presidents and their leadership by illuminating Theo's experiences and sharing her reflections on her life journey. When I asked Theo how she defines leadership, she did not offer a simple answer. Rather, she talked about the key things she does to be a good leader, including “enabling people to do their job,” “orchestrat[ing] the conversation so it can happen and be a real conversation,” “ask[ing] questions,” and “pay[ing] attention to the larger world.” Theo models the practical application of leadership; her leadership is transparent, and she takes action rather than simply pontificating about her role as president.

Theo reads widely on the subject of leadership and claimed that her style of management has been influenced by several authors, including Don Walker, her mentor from UMass Dartmouth (e.g., 1979), Jim Collins (e.g., Collins, 2001; Collins & Porras, 1994), and

Betty Siegel (e.g., Purkey & Siegel, 2002). Perhaps this is why Theo's leadership cannot be classified as one specific type; she draws from a variety of sources, including lessons from mentors and colleagues, and has created her own approach. Yet Theo's style fulfills many of the criteria set forth in the literature for good leadership. For example, Theo clearly exhibits the nine tenets of effective leadership identified by Mimi Wolverton et al. (2005): She is passionate, reflective, competent, resilient, focused and forward-thinking, credible, a great communicator, understands culture, and appreciates individuality.

In their study of women leaders, Wolverton et al. (2005) highlighted a college president who stated that "the presidency is all consuming. You must make a conscious decision to pursue it in lieu of something else—something has to give" (p. 9). Theo does not define her experiences in terms of missed opportunities, but in order to become a college administrator, she gave up classroom teaching and time to work on her research projects. Unlike her faculty colleagues, Theo has not written a culminating scholarly piece. Her work on campus and her scholarship remain vibrant, but her path in academia would have been very different had she remained in a faculty role. Furthermore, Theo's long-term partner left her soon after she became president of UMF; the relationship may have survived had Theo never become a college president. However, that loss changed Theo's path, which then led her to Deb, who is very supportive of Theo in her role as president and with whom she enjoys a happy, well-balanced life.

Theo's leadership can be described in a variety of ways, and this study was informed by transformational leadership as content theory. As such, this study informs the literature on transformational leadership, including the transformational leadership of women. UMF has thrived under Theo's tenure, demonstrating the relationship between presidential leadership

and an institution's health as noted by Yoram Neumann and Edith F. Neumann (2000). However, current conditions in the University of Maine System thwart some success as defined by Neumann and Neumann—namely an increase in resources. Public higher education in Maine is not well-funded, and UMF's ability to shine despite rapidly shrinking financial resources is a testament to Theo's leadership. For example, the most recent data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (2006) highlight that in 2004, UMF received the second-lowest state and local government appropriations per full-time equivalent student (FTE) of the seven institutions in the University of Maine System. The lowest funded school was the University of Maine at Augusta, which is not a residential campus. Despite these challenges, Theo was able to garner an additional \$700,000 in System funds to support UMF's transition to a new curriculum in the 2006-2007 academic year that will help UMF realize its goal of being a true liberal arts college. Furthermore, UMF receives the most positive recognition of all public institutions in the state, especially on the national level. It has been listed as one of "America's Best Colleges" by *US News and World Report* for nine consecutive years (UMF Web site) and has received the attention of higher education researchers interested in learning what makes campuses and students successful (e.g., Kuh et al., 2005).

In a study of gender differences in transformational leadership, John E. Roueche et al. (1989) found that women are more likely than men to possess certain attributes of transformational leadership, all of which describe Theo: She takes risks, is collaborative, cares for and respects others, and has garnered a great deal of trust from her colleagues. These qualities contribute to her strengths as a president. Perhaps women are more likely

than men to have these traits because of the way in which women are socialized, a phenomenon Theo described when reflecting on gender differences in leadership.

There is much to be learned about leadership from Theo, including her ability to demand what she calls “creative disrespect” from her colleagues, to which she truly listens. The manner in which Theo welcomes differing opinions and perspectives and then actually listens to and considers it in her decision-making processes garners her a great deal of trust. Surely many leaders lack the confidence required to be open like this, but the respect Theo has for her colleagues and her genuine desire to work for the greater good—rather than personal gain—allow her to lead with openness, honesty, and passion, and to truly be herself.

Theo’s Teachings on Practice

Working with College Presidents

Theo’s success as a college president is due in part to the fact that members of the UMF community understand her leadership style and have built positive working relationships with her. As a result, Theo’s story highlights how vital it is for people who work with college presidents to truly know those presidents. Although other college presidents may be less transparent about their leadership and decision-making processes than Theo, it is still important for campus community members to understand how their leaders function. This is particularly true for those who work most closely with college presidents. Theo explained that members of her president’s council learn quickly what to expect from her, and once they figure out how she operates, they are able to do their jobs well and with confidence. She reflected that “by the time you’ve been in president’s council awhile, you kind of know what your job is.” Theo’s closest colleagues have learned how to manage themselves within the context of her leadership style.

In order to be a successful leader, a college president must lead the institution in its entirety, yet many members of the campus community are focused solely on their own interests or tasks. Theo's first foray out of her own academic silo was when she became involved with the faculty union at UMass Dartmouth and interacted with professors from other disciplines. Later, when she worked for the UMass Dartmouth president, her network expanded and she gained a broader understanding of how an institution functions. Theo's transition from the faculty to administration required her to develop a holistic understanding of higher education, and she tries to foster that type of awareness in the UMF community. She shared an example of this type of understanding:

Yesterday I turned down a guy who asked for some money 'cause he's bringing an outside group to campus and he wanted some help, and I said "No, sorry, we give you the free space, that's all." And he wrote back . . . it's the nicest response I ever got from somebody that I turned down for something—and he said, "Well I remember when I wanted to bring the Vietnam Moving Wall to campus, and I was gonna do fundraising, and you said, 'Forget the fundraising, we'll pay for it.' And I'll always be grateful, and it was a wonderful experience, and so I really understand that right now you don't have any money."

This interaction between Theo and a man who works in institutional research highlights how everyone benefits when there is shared understanding of each other's roles. It also demonstrates how people who work at UMF are interested in building community beyond their specific job duties.

Aspiring to the Presidency

The ability to truly be oneself is very important in the search for a top leadership position. When Theo interviewed for college presidencies, she wanted to make sure that search committees knew what they would get if they hired her, as described in chapter 4. Theo emphasized the importance of fit in all job searches, especially for people who aspire to the presidency: “Don’t go anyplace that isn’t a good match . . . ‘cause that can really derail your chances, I think, if you go someplace that isn’t a good fit and you have to do bad things.” In such cases people may find themselves involved with decisions or policies with which they are not comfortable or that violate their personal values. It is then difficult for individuals to untangle themselves from such situations.

UMF has been a good fit for Theo. The institution and the town of Farmington are similar to her previous institution (Plymouth State) and the town in which it is located (Plymouth, New Hampshire). Before searching for a presidency, Theo knew that she enjoyed living in rural northern New England and had spent her career committed to public higher education. This is in contrast to the experience of Judith A. Sturnick, former president of UMF, who thought that she enjoyed life on rural campuses, but found “a tremendous sense of geographic and intellectual isolation” in Farmington (Murphy, 1991, p. 53). Sturnick did not find happiness in Farmington because “her personal needs were being overshadowed with each passing year by the amount of time she devoted to the campus and the Farmington community” (Murphy, p. 53). Furthermore, Sturnick worried that staying in Farmington would limit her future opportunities because she was “out of the mainstream” (Murphy, p. 53). Theo’s career, on the other hand, has flourished during her time at UMF, and she has been happy and effective in the somewhat remote location of Farmington. She has a fulfilling

life that includes involvement in the local, state, national, and higher education communities. Clearly the right fit for one person is not necessarily the right fit for another person, and aspiring college presidents should be aware of their own needs and expectations going into their search processes.

In offering insight on the search for a presidency, Theo elaborated on the concept of fit: "People get too eager to do it [be a president] and you know, go [to] a place that isn't right 'cause they get desperate. Try not to be desperate." One of the best ways not to be desperate in the job search is to look for a job while you have one. Theo suggested that this helps people make the right decisions about prospective positions. Furthermore, she encouraged individuals to take the time to find the right jobs:

You know it's a myth that you're gonna be stale on the job market; that's a lot of horse shit because one place searching doesn't know what the other place is doing, and so the only person that's gonna get stale is you. And don't [get stale].

As a result of finding the right fit, college presidents are more likely to be happy in their positions and to be successful leaders.

The challenge of the search for a presidency is that once individuals' home campuses know that they are job-seeking, community members' trust in them waivers. This seems particularly true for aspiring presidents because they are frequently in high-profile positions such as deanships or vice presidencies. Theo explained that such people can only apply for other jobs without success only once:

It can't be even two times because then they won't be able to believe [you] anymore. Once you can say, "Oh well, you know, they nominated me and I went to see what it

was like.” But if you do that more, then people say, “Ah, okay, wait until this one is gone.”

Finally, Theo advised people seeking the presidency and other high-profile leadership roles not to take positions with time-limited mandates because it is difficult to be successful in fulfilling such directives while trying to learn a new job. She explained that as a new leader it is essential to “figure out what’s going on and who you’ve got to deal with” and time-limited mandates can undermine one’s success as a newcomer.

Hiring a President

Theo’s advice for aspiring college presidents also highlights the importance for hiring boards to find presidents who fit well with their institutions. Not only is this crucial for the health of the institutions themselves, but it is also vital for the communities in which the campuses are located. Janet Gorman Murphy (1991) explained that gaining community support is particularly important for presidents of rural colleges. Theo realized the need for improving town–gown relations as soon as she became president:

When I first came I was invited to go to Rotary, and I went and I gave my little inspirational speech, and they landed on me like a ton of bricks about the fact that the previous president had told folks that they were not welcome to come and take courses. They were mad! . . . I came back to the office and I said, “What is this?” and they said, “This is the policy” and I said, “Not anymore it isn’t.” And then we made sure that everybody knew, so they weren’t mad anymore.

Although Theo’s approach to solving this problem and others may have surprised people at the beginning of her presidency, she has had the freedom to do what she deems necessary because she was herself in the hiring process and was clear about her style.

Tips for Success as a President

Theo's style is consistent regardless of the situation or audience, which contributes to her ability to earn the trust of colleagues and stakeholders. As president of UMF, Theo has also learned how to navigate high-stakes politics. She must maintain good relationships with people in her backyard, around the state, in the region, and beyond. In addition to giving her time and money to causes of personal interest, such as the Maine Humanities Council and the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence, Theo represents UMF on numerous boards, including the Finance Authority of Maine and the Maine Economic Growth Council.

Theo offered a few additional nuggets of wisdom for individuals in the presidency. She warned of the danger of being too passionate about the ways in which goals are achieved. Presidents need to be involved, but should also "be a little detached too so that it doesn't necessarily have to go exactly the way that [they] thought it was gonna go." This does not negate the need for firmness, however. Theo has stood her ground on matters that are of great importance to her. She shared a story from her interim presidency at Plymouth State that demonstrates her ability to do so without losing support from the community:

We were doing some landscaping in the little courtyard in front of the student center and we had to take down some trees because we were moving the dirt around and the trees weren't going to live. One of the very senior professors came to me and said, "If you take down that tree out there, I'm gonna have to chain myself to the tree." And I said, "You do that. You know, I think that is a good symbolic act for you to do. I'll bring you a sleeping bag, and I'll bring you some nice, hot soup, and then I'm gonna call the police and have you taken the fuck outta there." And he didn't do anything. Funny thing.

Theo's ability to take a stand about matters that are important to her—even those that are controversial—without losing support from the community is tied to her willingness to listen. Her leadership is an example of how important it is for college presidents to listen to members of their communities to be willing to hear and consider others' perspectives.

Theo's personal interests have also contributed to her success as a president. She takes time to cook healthy meals and exercise because she values her health and knows that healthy living contributes to her professional success. Members of the campus community consider Theo to be a model for balanced living. A UMF student told me that she thinks it would be neat to have Theo as her personal trainer. In addition to her athletic pursuits, Theo enjoys a wide variety of hobbies, including building model ships and gardening. She is also a voracious reader and she enjoys everything from science fiction, to poetry, to academic novels, to literature that simply makes her laugh. Theo reads Patrick O'Brien's 20-volume series of historical naval fiction *every* year when she's "ready for Jack and Stephen again." Theo is a model for other presidents because she has been committed to her loved ones, taken care of herself, and pursued her own interests while also successfully leading UMF.

Future Research

This study contributes to the literature on women college presidents, transformational women leaders, and the presidents of small, public colleges. Use of the feminist perspective allowed Theo to be front and center in this study—she was not compared to anyone and her story stands on its own. More studies of this type are needed in order to illuminate the experiences of women college presidents especially if the higher education community hopes to increase the number of women in these positions. Aspiring women college presidents need role models from whom they can learn as they explore top leadership positions in academia.

I would thoroughly enjoy conducting similar studies with other women. There are many research paths to follow; it would be interesting to learn the stories of women who lead institutions similar to UMF, but it would be equally as interesting to explore the experiences of women who have led other types of colleges. Theo expressed her interest in joining other women presidents who have been in their positions for long periods of time in writing a book about the value of long tenures at the helm of institutions.

This project resulted in the collection of large amounts of data that were not included in this paper. For example, I interviewed every member of president's council, but did not share that data because I did not want to use it to "verify" Theo's story and therefore undermine the purpose of putting Theo front and center. However, I want to return to that data to explore the ways in which Theo's closest advisors support her in her work and how members of president's council, including Theo, lead UMF as a team. Another avenue of exploration is to study Theo's leadership from the perspective of the state system to gain an understanding of how Theo and UMF fit within that context.

Some readers may find my choice to place Theo's story front and center as a limitation because it does not balance her perspective with information from her colleagues or other sources. However, attempting to "verify" Theo's story in that manner would violate use of the feminist perspective and autoethnography. If one were to conduct a study in which Theo's story were balanced with other people's stories, a different methodology would be required, and likely a different theoretical perspective would be needed as well. I consider the nature of this research to be its strength, however, and use of feminist theory and autoethnography allowed me to explore Theo's story from her perspective while also allowing me to be present in the study.

It has been challenging to conduct an autoethnographic study as an education study because this methodology is not common in the social sciences and none of the faculty members in my department use autoethnography. Furthermore, autoethnography encompasses a wide variety of approaches to research, as described in chapter 3, so there is no clear path to follow when conducting this type of study. I selected autoethnography after exploring other methodologies that simply did not work with my study or allow me to achieve my goals for this study. I like that autoethnography demands that researchers look beyond the structure provided by theoretical perspectives and literature. I encourage other doctoral students in the social sciences interested in autoethnography to make sure it feels right to them as individuals and researchers, and to confirm that they have the support of their program of study committees before embarking on this type of study because the end product does not look and feel like a traditional social sciences dissertation.

My Journey

This paper represents a significant journey in my life experience as a student, a scholar, and a woman. Autoethnography demanded that I be present in each moment of this study and share parts of myself within the context of exploring Theo's life. As a result of my introspection, I learned more about myself and my relationships with loved ones. Yet what was most significant for me was the opportunity to spend time at UMF and to get to know members of that community. When I embarked on this study I knew from my major professor that Theo was a remarkable woman and that I was likely to learn a lot from her. I did not anticipate, however, the graciousness that was extended to me by Theo, Deb, and members of their work family.

On February 28, 2006 I said goodbye to Theo and Deb after attending the final Moose Country Mardi Gras celebration at UMF. It was an evening of festivity to raise money for Hurricane Katrina relief in Gulf Coast communities and for a local charity. Theo gave me a hug when we separated and said that she looked forward to reading my paper. I expressed my interest in returning to UMF to deliver my dissertation and she exclaimed, "Great! We'll have a party!" As I watched Theo walk away, bundled up in her winter gear with Deb by her side, I was excited, nervous, and exhausted. This was a shared adventure and I am humbled by the experience.

A Last Interlude: Final Reflections

As I put the finishing touches on this paper after passing my oral defense and engaging in a lively discussion with my committee members and Theo, I am aware that I will never stop learning from this study and others' interpretations of it. I do not think that it is a perfect specimen of scholarship; rather, it represents my learning, my first attempt at autoethnography, and the partnership of inquiry in which I engaged with Theo. I now realize that in the middle of this study I did what I set out to avoid; I allowed my voice to be replaced with the voices of others – namely, Bass and Riggio (2006) – as I explored Theo's role as a transformational leader. One committee member commented that the sudden shift in voice in that part of chapter 4 is "jarring." I agree. Perhaps my greatest nugget of learning regarding methodology is that I should have – and could have – given myself the permission to be fully true to autoethnography, to myself, and to Theo by completely resisting all urges to place this study and the stories it represents in traditional frameworks. I decided, however, not to change chapter 4. Rather, it stands as an example of my learning and a foundation for my future work with autoethnography. I look forward to the next adventure.

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION TO THEO KALIKOW

4717 Mortensen Road #110
Ames, IA 50014-6219
November 10, 2005

Dr. Theodora J. Kalikow, President
University of Maine at Farmington
111 South Street
Farmington, ME 04938

Dear President Kalikow,

I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University studying with Dr. John H. Schuh. My dissertation will focus on the experiences of a woman college president shared through her stories.

I learned of your work through the National Survey of Student Engagement's (NSSE) Project DEEP, with which Dr. Schuh was involved. He had the opportunity to meet with you when he visited your campus, which sparked my interest in your work as a transformational leader. In addition, although numerous biographies of college presidents exist, most highlight men and women who lead prestigious private institutions. You are of interest to me because you lead a small public liberal arts college in a relatively remote geographical location that has garnered national attention in recent years. I have enjoyed learning about your institution and the high quality educational experience it offers students. I would like to tell the story of leading this type of campus through the experiences of its president.

If you have interest in discussing my study, I would like to set up a time to talk with you after Thanksgiving. At that time I will share more details about my plans, which include collecting data in early 2006. If you are willing to participate, I anticipate making two or three trips to Farmington to interview you and observe your work environment.

Thank you for considering this proposal. I will contact your office before Thanksgiving to determine if you are interested in speaking with me. Or, if you prefer, I can be reached via email at lross@iastate.edu or phone at 515-292-8213.

Sincerely,

Leah Ewing Ross

APPENDIX B

E-MAIL REPLY FROM THEO KALIKOW

From the desk of...
Leah Ewing Ross

From: Theo Kalikow <kalikow@maine.edu>
Thu, 17 Nov 2005 12:51:29 -0500
study

Hi Leah, got your letter. I'm happy to participate in your study. All my contact information is below....do be in touch so we can set up a time to talk. Best -- Theo.

--

Theodora J. Kalikow
President, University of Maine at Farmington
224 Main Street
Farmington, ME 04938 USA
TEL.:(207)778-7256
FAX: (207)778-8189
E-Mail: kalikow@maine.edu
www.umaine.farmington.edu

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: THEO KALIKOW

Of note: A semi-structured interview format was used in this study and this is not an exhaustive list of the questions I asked of Theo during my time with her.

Life Experiences—Professional

1. You were a chemistry major at Wellesley and received your master's and doctoral degrees in philosophy. How and why did you make that transition?
2. Why have you stayed in academia?
3. How has the field of academia transformed or evolved during your lifetime?
4. What was it about the positions you've had that have helped prepare you for your current role as president and to stay in the presidency? What experiences and learning opportunities occurred in your life to prepare you to assume this role?
5. What decisions have you made that have defined your path?
6. What significant opportunities have you taken advantage of, and why?
7. What opportunities have you turned down, and why?
8. When did you aspire to the presidency?
9. What was it about UMF that attracted you to the presidency here?
10. You have committed a great deal of your career to institutions like UMF (small public colleges). Is there something about this type of institution that appeals to you? Did you make a decision to stay with this type of institution?
11. How do you view the prestige of this university? How important is prestige to you?
12. What were your expectations of this position?
13. Has the position met those expectations? If so, or if not, how?

14. Have your expectations of the position changed? If so, how?
15. What is your most important role as president?
16. What has made you successful in your career?
17. Who do you perceive as your boss or bosses?
18. What is your working relationship like with your board?
19. What do you like about your position?
20. What do you dislike about your position?
21. Why do you stay in this position?
22. What would you encourage new faculty to do/not do to be prepared for this type of progression to the college presidency?

Leadership

1. Who have been your mentors and role models and can you explain your relationships with them?
2. How do you define leader? How do you see yourself within that definition?
3. What specifically (if anything) have you done to work on your leadership skills? E.g. Professional development as it relates to leadership.
4. Do you reflect on your decisions? If so, do you do things differently as a result of that reflection? Would you be willing to share an example?
5. What differences have you noticed between female and male leadership?
6. How do you balance your personal and professional lives? Do the personal and professional parts of your life complement each other, or does that dance between those parts of your life result in role disjunction?

7. What have been your biggest challenges and greatest successes as a woman college president?
8. What advice do you have for aspiring women college presidents?
9. What do you view as your most important contributions to UMF, Farmington, Maine, and the higher education communities?

Life Experiences—Personal

1. Please tell me about your life path to this point: where you grew up, details of relationships with your loved ones that you're willing to share, your educational and personal experiences.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: MEMBERS OF PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL

1. Can you describe a bit about your role on campus and how Theo's role as president intersects with your work?
2. How would you describe Theo's influence on the UMF community?
3. How do you define leader? How do you see Theo within that definition?
4. Can you recall a situation that conveys her qualities (as described in answers to questions above) and share it with me?

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