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The Labyrinth to Leadership: A Multicase Study

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THE LABYRINTH TO LEADERSHIP
A MULTICASE STUDY

By

Melody J. Schopp

Dissertation

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The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
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This qualitative multi-case study was a life-history of three women leaders in the state of South Dakota. The purpose of the study was to explore the career pathways of three female leaders in educational and political fields in South Dakota. Specifically, I sought to identify the events and opportunities guiding them to their positions of leadership in the traditionally male-dominated culture of South Dakota. In this study I identified the leadership characteristics that these women embraced along their journeys. I identified the support systems for these women and in doing so, it may be possible to look at ways of increasing support for others. I examined the barriers these women faced in the conservative culture in South Dakota and in doing so, it may be possible to better educate others on how to address barriers, perceived or real. This information may also assist ambitious women in realizing the opportunities they have in South Dakota.

Resources used consisted of participant observations, in-depth interviews, and reviews of numerous related written materials. Triangulation was used to validate the findings of the data collected. The data were coded, analyzed and synthesized such that themes developed.

Themes were developed to identify the specific characteristics common to these women leaders: The characteristics of hard work, confidence and high expectations were foundational, and they continued to guide women on their paths through the unexpected
twists and turns. The characteristics of courage, ambition and caring were intuitive as these women progressed along the leadership path. Foundational to these women’s success, however, was the support of family and the time period in which these women were raised. Additionally, unique characteristics formed the distinctive personalities and stories that unfolded throughout their treks through their personal labyrinths.

As a result of the study, it was concluded that South Dakota holds immeasurable opportunities for ambitious females with their sites set on achieving leadership success as they traverse their individual paths throughout their labyrinths.
Dedication

Cynthia K. Schneider

In loving memory of the friend,

who supported, pushed, encouraged, and

reminded me of the importance of laughing and

taking time for the important people in your life.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am certain the journey I have followed in pursuit of this goal is not unique. The struggles to balance best intentions with the demands of work and family have been common to many that have preceded me. The emotional roller coaster throughout the venture has been filled with feelings of accomplishments, frustrations, fulfillment and sometimes distress. It has provided me with the chance to grow professionally as well as personally and has resulted in a overwhelming feeling of accomplishment. But without the encouragement and support of friends, family, advisors, colleagues and the participants, this dream would have been unfilled. Continued support, encouragement, and interest never went unnoticed.

The women that contributed to this study provided me with a new awe and respect for three individuals I held previously in high regard. They have inspired me to reflect on my life and path through my labyrinth. They gave unselfishly and willing of their time to support me and as a result, have impacted my life with their stories. I am extremely thankful for the opportunity they gave me to know them more intimately, but more so, for providing me the rich content of this study.

A very special thank you to my advisor and friend, Dr. Barbara LaCost, who motivated and pushed me to ‘get this done’! It was through her encouragement, patience, and guidance that I was able to look at things differently. She has been a strong silent supporter of me throughout this journey and I could not have completed this without her ongoing help. I also wish to thank my committee members, Dr. Marilyn Grady, Dr. Larry Duglosh, and Dr. James King for their support and direction throughout my entire
passage at the University of Lincoln. The flexibility that the entire faculty has allowed in working with distance students is admirable and without it, this vision would not have been a possibility for me.

I would like to acknowledge the role of my parents throughout my personal and educational trek through life. They provided the strong foundation in my life that modeled that anything could be accomplished through hard work and determination. My mother’s ongoing determination to live life to the fullest after the loss of my father and her quest for knowledge has proved to be a great inspiration to me.

Special friends have given me the needed impetus, and for that, I am eternally thankful. The words of encouragement and the celebration of successes along the way have meant so much. My dedication is in memory of Cynthia Schneider, who encouraged me in this endeavor and was my continual inspiration and support even in her weakest moments. Throughout this work, I sensed her eternal spirit and I will forever miss her presence.

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CHAPTER I
THE Labyrinth TO LEADERSHIP

Found in cultures throughout the world, a labyrinth is a path made up of a circular pattern with twists and turns. There is only one route leading the walker to the center, and then out again on the same path to return to the entrance. You cannot get lost in a labyrinth. The labyrinth suggests a complex journey which is neither simple nor direct. It requires the voyager to be aware of progress and to carefully analyze success along the winding and twisting corridors (Artress, 1995). Thus, it provides an encouraging metaphor for appraising three women’s journeys as they wound their way through their personal labyrinths. Insightful accounts of lives well lived should provide encouragement for aspiring women leaders as well as a recognition of the women behind the stories.

Introduction

Previous studies have focused on women in leadership, inclusive of female characteristics, comparison to their male counterparts, or discussing the different factors related to equality in pay or position. In this study the researcher focused on women who have climbed the ladder to leadership positions in education and politics. The distinction of this study is that it occurred in South Dakota, a state that has a high percentage of women in the workforce, however it holds the nationwide distinction of the lowest wages for women and the smallest percentages for women in managerial and political positions (Caiazza, 2004).
A visitor to South Dakota would find that the state advertises itself through the state logo of “Great Faces, Great Places.” The license plates proclaim a claim to fame of Mount Rushmore, the massive and impressive carvings of four of the great American leaders in United States history. Entombed in the mountain, the Hall or Records contains original records written by Gutzon Borglum, the designer and sculptor of the mountain. One of the essays includes an explanation of why these four presidents were chosen:

… George Washington signifies the struggle for independence and the birth of the Republic; Thomas Jefferson the territorial expansion of the country; Abraham Lincoln the permanent union of the states and equality for all citizens; and Theodore Roosevelt, the 20th century role of the United States in world affairs and the rights of the common man (Farrell, 2007).

Nearby is the start of another monument honoring Crazy Horse, the Native American Indian leader considered a hero because of his skill in battle, and because of his character and his loyalty to his people (Bright, 2004, p. 125). The common factor in both of these monuments is the attention directed to great male leaders that helped shape our country and the state of South Dakota. Such emphasis extols the great achievements of male leaders but contributes to the context for the disparity and lack of recognition of female to male leaders in South Dakota.

Purpose

The purpose of the life-history study was to explore the career pathways of three female leaders in both educational and political fields in South Dakota. Specifically, I
sought to identify the traits and opportunities guiding them to their positions of leadership in the traditionally male-dominated culture of South Dakota.

Research Questions

The central phenomenon of the study was based on the question: “What were the experiences and events that led three women to positions of leadership in South Dakota?”

Sub-questions of the study include:

1. What were the support systems for these women along their career paths?
2. What if any relationship did being female have to their perceived strengths and weaknesses?
3. How did specific events shape their career choices?
4. What influence did the culture of South Dakota have on their progression to a place of leadership?

Context of the Problem

An understanding of the context of the study is critical to an understanding of the distinctiveness of South Dakota. Found in the heartland of the Midwest, South Dakota has a 2007 population of 796,214 within its 77,129 square miles, which is 9.9 people per square mile (46th nationwide). Eighty-nine percent of cities in South Dakota have a population less than 3,000 people. Of the remaining 11%, 8% live in the two largest cities in South Dakota, Sioux Falls and Rapid City. Eighty-nine percent of the population is white, and the remaining minority population is primarily Native American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).
The state is divided, culturally and politically, by the Missouri River, which bisects the state. The area east of the Missouri River (or "East River"), reflects generally more moderate views that are aligned with those found in the Midwestern neighbors of Iowa and Minnesota. "West River" residents, however, hold more conservative views that are generally more in line with those found in its western neighbors, Montana and Wyoming. On the whole, South Dakota is considered quite conservative, e.g., it is considered one of the most politically pro-life states in the United States.

In 2004, South Dakota’s per capita personal income was $26,894, the 37th highest in the nation and 13.08 % below the national average. Thirteen and two tenths percent of the population is below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Due to the rural nature of South Dakota and traditional low incomes for both men and women, high percentages of women work to make ends meet for a family. Women’s labor force participation rates are highest in Midwestern and prairie states, and South Dakota ranks second in the nation with 68.1 % of women employed (Caiazza & Shaw, 2004). Despite the large number of women in the workforce, South Dakota placed 50th for median annual earnings for full-time year-round employed women at $24,400 (Werschkul & Williams, 2004). Equally discouraging, South Dakota placed 39th, with 30.1% of civilian non-institutionalized women aged 16 and older employed in executive, administrative, managerial, or professional specialty occupations in 2001 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003).

This study focused on women in the realms of politics and education, thus it is important to understand the disproportion of female to male involvement. South Dakota ranked 48th in a composite political participation index including factors of women’s
voter registration, voter turnout, institutional resources and women in political office (Caiazza & Shaw, 2004). Only 17 of the 105 legislators in the 2008 session in South Dakota were women. This 16.2% involvement, up 2% from 2005, placed South Dakota in 42nd place, up from 48th in 2005 nationwide (Center for American Women and Politics, 2006). The small number of female legislators contributed to the diminutive numbers of leadership positions held by females as well.

The same lack of a strong women’s presence in leadership also is obvious in the South Dakota educational system. Of the 161 public districts in South Dakota, there were 23 (14.29%) women compared to 138 (85.71%) male superintendents in 2007-08 school year. This is less than the national average of 18% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). Females are also under-represented as principals at all levels in South Dakota. Reported by the South Dakota Department of Education, (2008) of the 161 public districts with a high school, only 29 (17.8%) are women, compared with the national average of 26% (NCES, 2007). The percentage of female middle school principals was slightly higher at 19%. At the elementary level, 50.6% of South Dakota principals were female, slightly lower than the national average of 56% (NCES, 2007). Beyond the school system, positions of educational leadership, to include the Department of Education and the Board of Education, were traditionally occupied by males, something the women in this study were able to change.

Significance

It is obvious from the statistics that South Dakota’s female workforce is high in number, and yet low in equality for positions of leadership, specifically in education and politics. What the data didn’t validate was if barriers, perceived or real, contributed to the
small percentage of women in leadership roles in South Dakota. Rather than focusing on hindrances, this study focused on women who embraced leadership and achieved statewide visibility for their accomplishments throughout their professional and personal lives. Rich stories from these three women uncovered strong personal traits that contributed to their successful careers and to the state. The chronicles of their lives as they navigated through their personal labyrinths should provide encouragement and serve as role models for ambitious women looking to impact their careers in leadership capacities.

Bloom found value in the exploration of women’s life stories:

The importance of focusing on women's lives in their personal narratives is great: They illuminate the course of a life over time and the relationship between the individual and society; they demonstrate how women negotiate their “exceptional” gender status both in their daily lives and over the course of a lifetime; and they make possible the examination of the links between the evolution of subjectivity and its shifts and changes and the development of female identity. (1998, p.146)

Definition of Terms

Case study - A variation of an ethnography in that the researcher provides an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, an event, a process, or an individual based on extensive data collection (Creswell, 1998)

Central phenomenon – An issue or process explored in qualitative research (Creswell, 2002).
**Glass Ceilings** - Barriers/obstacles that exclude women from the upper decision-making positions in organizations (Kanter, 1977).

**Member Checking** – The qualitative process during which the researcher ask one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account (Creswell, 2000).

**One-on-one interviews** – Data collection processes in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time.

**Open-coding** - The process used by the theorist to form initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2002).

**Quintain** - Members of a group or examples of phenomenon that are categorically bound together (Stake, 2006, p. 6).

**Triangulation** - The process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and these in qualitative research (Stake, 1995).

**Delimitations**

The purpose of phenomenological research is not to obtain generalizations but to describe in detail the breadth and depth of individual experience with the phenomenon and the meaning structures of such experience (Creswell, 2002). Robert Stake (2006) pointed out that multicase studies are “studies of particularization more than generalization” (p. 8).

This study was delimited to three participants. Stake emphasized the need for commonality of individual cases that can be categorically bound together. Stake refers to the group, category, or phenomenon as a “quintain” (Stake, 2006, p. 6). The commonality of this particular quintain was women who were recognized for their leadership positions.
in South Dakota in both education and politics. He also concurred, however, that it is important to have both balance and variety. The opportunity to learn is of primary importance (Stake, 1995).

Limitations

I brought to this study my own experience as a female who had achieved a degree of recognition for my leadership skills while living in a traditional state and community. The study prompted me to reflect on my own journey to my current position. I realized that I may not be able to completely discard my own interpretive lens nor free myself from my own pre-judgments (Vermersh, 1999). It is suggested by Moran (2000) and Solowoski (2000) that interviewers answer the questions themselves prior to the interview to help identify any preconceptions they may have that may taint the interpretation of individual interviews. This I did. Stake (2005) stated that we rely heavily on our previous experience. He emphasized the need to minimize the misperception and invalidity of our assertions. “Good case study is patient, reflective, willing to see another view of the case” (Stake, 1995).
As we twist and wind through the labyrinth of the literature review, the epiphany upon exiting should help the readers to set the stage for rich stories to be presented in the following chapter as each woman embarks on her journey. The ensuing research regarding the past and current status of women in politics and education will (a) analyze and disseminate information about women’s progress in achieving rights and opportunities; (b) identify and measure the remaining barriers to equality, and (c) provide background information for this study specific to the State of South Dakota. Finally the literature review will help the reader to better understand the research regarding current characteristics of female leaders. The literature review was organized for the reader as follows:

Diagram 1
An Overview of Women’s Status Across the States

During the 20th century, women made significant economic, political, and social advances, yet they do not enjoy gender equality. Throughout the United States, women earn less than men, are seriously underrepresented in political office, and make up a disproportionate share of people in poverty. Even in areas where there have been advances in women’s status, rates of progress are slow. For example, at the rate of progress achieved between 1989 and 2002, women will not achieve wage parity for more than 50 years. If women’s representation in Congress changed at the rate it did during this same time from from 1989 to 2002, it would take almost 100 years to achieve equality in political representation (Werschkul & Williams, 2004).

In discussions of equality for women in the work force, we often hear the term “glass ceiling.” Cited in a 1986 article by two Wall Street Journal reporters, the term resonated and quickly became part of everyday language. “Even those few women who rose steadily through the ranks eventually crashed into an invisible barrier. The executive suite seemed within their grasp, but they just couldn’t break through the glass ceiling” (Hymowitz & Shcellhardt, 1986, p. 1).

The term referred to what appeared to be an invisible, but impenetrable, barrier between women and access to the executive office, preventing them from reaching the highest levels of the business and management world regardless of accomplishments and merits. The phrase immediately captured the attention of the public as well as business leaders, journalists, and policy makers. Thus the term “glass ceiling” became a part of our
language, and within five years was in use in legal documents (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

The Civil Rights Act of 1991 focused on gender discrimination, establishing the U.S. Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (FGCC). The charter of the FGCC was to identify the causes of gender discrimination and to make recommendations to eliminate it. From 1991 to 1995, the FGCC examined employment conditions in both private and public sectors, and concluded that gender inequity existed in both spheres (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

However, the recognition of gender inequity did not change its status. In a report published a decade later by the Catalyst (2006), women held more than one-half of management and professional positions in 2005, but only 16.4% of corporate officer positions were held by females. Women held 6.4% of top earner positions. In measuring the rate of growth in women’s leadership posts over the decade from 1995 to 2005, (0.82 percentage points per year), it was estimated that is would take 40 years for women to reach uniformity with men in corporate officer ranks.

Women do not enjoy equality in managerial roles with men, and they also lack the financial stability that would allow them to achieve it. In eleven states, women’s poverty actually increased between 1995 and 2002, and in another seven states, it fell by less than one percentage point, compared with 1.6% points nationally (Werschkul & Williams, 2004).

Women and Politics

Many of the pervasive issues that keep women from achieving gender equality will not be resolved without proper representation in the political arena.
The first women representatives in the United States were elected in 1894 when Colorado votes sent three women to the state legislature. Two years later in 1896, the first woman senator was elected to the Utah State Senate. Now, a century later, women almost everywhere are the majority of voters but a distinct minority of elected officials (CAWP, 2006).

The temptation is to view women as the victims due to the lack of representation in political participation. However, the literature from two studies over forty years apart concluded that women’s under-representation in Congress and elsewhere is due to their lack of ambition and confidence (Schlesinger, 1966, Davidson-Schmich, 2006).

Even ambitious women were less likely than ambitious men to actually run for a higher post. Lawless and Fox (2005) found American women less likely than men to run for office due to their own perceived deficit of confidence and negative family support. Potential candidates were surveyed, revealing that men were roughly two thirds more likely than women to assess themselves as ‘qualified’ or ‘very qualified’ to run for office. Women in the sample were twice as likely as men to rate themselves ‘not at all qualified.’

The obstacle continued to be the “recruitment problem”—getting more women to run (CAWP, 2005). Although society was more willing to accept women in the political arena, traditional norms may have inhibited them at certain phases of their lives. Childbearing years and household responsibilities posed challenges for women to be absent from the home for the long periods of time; in their own state legislature or in Washington, DC (Fox & Lawless, 2003).

Caiazzo (2006) found through interviews that women expressed disillusionment with politics. It was argued that the political system is unresponsive, particularly to those
who are not economically and racially privileged. Some women articulated a general
discomfort with holding leadership roles or any public role of authority. Others, however,
expressed a basic resistance to thinking of political activism as appropriate to their lives
as women—they just didn’t perceive that the political arena was ‘women’s’ place.

Research suggested that traditional gender roles continue to play an important part
in the decision to run for office. Interpersonal reasons often weigh into factors of why
women may choose not to run for office. Although men may choose to ignore spousal
lack of support in running for office, that support may be a determining factor for women
(Carroll, 1994). The lack of spousal support frequently forces women to leave political
office due to the conflicts with their family lives (Thomas, Herrick, & Braunstein, 2002).
Fox and Lawless (2004) suggested a correlation of the decrease in women’s
responsibilities for household tasks with an increase in interest in running for political
office. The same household division of labor does not correlate with a men’s likelihood
of considering candidacy.

Men are often encouraged to run for office in a different manner than women.
Women candidates are encouraged by family while men are encouraged by colleagues.
Additionally, political party leaders are guilty of discouraging women candidates or they
subconsciously imply bias against them. They approach fewer women to run than men
(Fox, 2000).

Political participation is an important way for women of all races and ethnicities
to shape the policies that affect their lives. Walsh and Carroll (2004) reported that women
vote in higher numbers than men and have done so in every election since 1964. In 2000,
7.8 million more women voted than did men. Traditionally, more women register to vote
than men. In 2000, 68.7 million women were registered to vote compared to 59.4 million men. The research found women influence elections in unpredictable ways. Women are late deciders and make up a higher number of undecided and swing voters than men (CAWP, 2005).

Werschkul & Williams (2004) testified that more women tend to register to vote than men in all states except Pennsylvania. Women are more likely to vote than men in all but seven states: Hawaii, Kentucky, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota. Four of the states where women vote at lower rates than men—Kentucky, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota—also rank in the bottom ten for women’s representation in elected office.

The first congresswoman, Jeanette Rankin, was elected in 1916. However, as late as 1970, only 10 women had served in Congress (CAWP, 2006b). Early female office holders were women who served out their deceased husbands’ terms and seldom pursued their own political careers. Forty seven women have been elected or appointed to fill congressional vacancies created by the deaths of their husbands, eight to the U.S. Senate and 39 to the U. S. House of Representatives (CAWP, 2005).

Between 1996 and 2006, the number of women governors increased from one to eight. Although the number of women serving in state legislatures has increased more than four-fold since 1971, the proportion of women state legislators increased very little, from 20.8% to 22.8%, between 1996 and 2006 (CAWP, 2006a). In 2008, 86 women equaling 16.1% served in Congress. Of those 86 women, 20, or 23.3% were women of color (CAWP, 2008).
The trend in 2008 was a higher percentage of women involved in the legislature at a state level. In 2008, 1,741, or 23.6% of the 7,382 state legislators in the United States were women. Women held 423, or 21.5%, of the 1,971 state senate seats and 1,318, or 24.4%, of the 5,411 state house or assembly seats. Since 1971, the number of women serving in state legislatures has more than quintupled (CAWP, 2008).

Women made significant movement into leadership positions within state legislatures in the 1990s and early 2000s. The first woman to hold a major leadership position was from North Dakota in 1933. Not only was she the elected speaker, but was the only woman in her legislature. Through the end of 2005, 21 women (six Democrats and 14 Republicans) in 14 states served as speakers. Oregon has had four women speakers, all serving since the mid-1980s. North Dakota has had three women speakers, and Arkansas has had two, both of whom served in the 1990s. Only 11 women have served as Senate presidents through the end of 2005 (three Democrats, six Republicans) in seven states with the first, from Arkansas, elected in 1987 (Carroll, 2004; CAWP, 2005).

Female influence was prevalent in the 1990’s when the federal workforce saw significant changes. President Clinton provided unprecedented opportunities for women, especially at senior levels. Attorney General Janet Reno and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright became the first-ever female appointees to those positions. Other women served as heads of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Air Force. Women, well represented in the Clinton Administration, comprised half the attendees at senior staff meetings in the White House (Kirschten, 2000).
Women in Educational Leadership

Although the largest percentage of staff working in education is female, persons occupying the position of principal and particularly superintendent are disproportionately male (Wesson, 2002). Even with the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the passing of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the increase in the number of females compared to the number of males serving as educational leaders in school districts nationwide has occurred at a very slow rate. Grogan and Brunner (2005) indicated that women held superintendent positions in 18% of the 13,728 districts nationwide. The under-representation of females in education becomes more blatant the higher the position in the career path (Glass, 2000).

In 1994 women represented only 24% of elementary and secondary school principals. The percentage increased to 46.4% in 2000, with 55.1% as elementary principals, and 23.1% of women serving as secondary principals. Another increase occurred four years later in 2004 when 49.7% of all principals were female. Although the number of elementary female principals increased slightly to 56%, the number of female secondary principals increased by almost 3% to 26% (NCES, 2007).

The small percentage of female leaders in educational settings can be attributed to the traditional climate surrounding school cultures. Schools have been traditionally led by male administrators who governed teachers, students and staff through formalized goals and procedures (Lee, Smith & Croninger, 1996). Public perception favored men as better able than women to handle discipline, particularly at the secondary level. Men were viewed as more capable than women for working with boards of education who were predominately male and dealing with the political aspect of schools. Feminine behavior
was viewed as more nurturing and caring for others through the use of interpersonal skills, consensus, and negotiation for solving problems. This attitude supported the premise of women in the role of a teacher or elementary principal (Shakeshift, 1989).

Women sometimes have a different timeline on their way to educational leadership roles. Women combine parenthood and teaching, thus delaying their entry into management or principalship until their children are older (Tallerico, 2000). Tallerico suggested the age males consider the early stages of their “twilight” years (45 to 55 years of age) may not be the same “twilight” year’s age for females who chose to raise children and are now seeking new career challenges.

Tallerico (2000) observed that experiences in the classroom lead many school boards to hire women as educational leaders rather than administrators. Women demonstrated the ability to maintain organizational relationships and to respond to parents and the community effectively. Additionally, Tallerico noted that school boards often hire superintendents based on gut reaction and the members’ ability to relate to the candidate. Given that the majority of school board members are comprised of men, a tendency may exist to be more connected to a male candidate.

Swiderski (1988) suggested women that did achieve executive positions in education and who broke through glass ceilings often demonstrated a strong desire to succeed and viewed themselves as leaders despite the white male leadership stereotype dominant in society.

Men have had other advantages unavailable to women that offered ways of tying the schools to the male power structure of the larger social environment. Hansot and Tyack (1981) pointed out that in the 1970’s and 1980’s, men could join all-male groups
like the Rotary Clubs and the Elks and there gain significant information, friendships and political support. The lack of formal and informal social networks, or not being a member of the “clubs” as men, results in the lack of recognition that often leads to advancement (Growe & Montgomery, 1998).

In addition to under-representation in the K12 system, Chase and Bell (1994) noted that several state departments of education, university departments of education, and some state legislatures have publicly identified the under representation of females in educational leadership as a problem. Little has been done to aggressively address the issue, and the majority of leaders in state departments of education, university departments of education, and legislatures are primarily guided by men.

Although considerable research has addressed the small percentage of women in principal and superintendent roles, no research was identified regarding women in levels of educational leadership roles, e.g., on state boards of education or holding positions as chief state school officers. According to the National State Boards of Education in 2008, only 15 of the states (30%) have women serving as state board chairs (NASBE, 2008). However, among the current Chief State School Officers in 2008, 20 women (40%) are leading their state education agencies (CCSSO, 2008).

**An Overview of Women in South Dakota**

South Dakota is the sixth smallest in the United States with a 2007 population of 796,214. Considerably more rural than much of the country, the people are impacted by vast distances between resources. Accessing hospitals, social services and employment opportunities are often limited in remote areas. Three-hundred, sixty four thousand
women live and work in South Dakota and 65% live outside metropolitan areas, more
than three times the national figure of 18% (Caiazza & Shaw, 2004).

South Dakota women represent the second highest labor force participation rate in
the nation, yet they rank 50th for women’s median annual earnings for full-time work.
Forty-five and one-third of Native American women in South Dakota—almost half—
lived below poverty levels in 1999, compared with 10.4% of white females. This figure
ranked South Dakota last in the country for Native American women’s poverty and is far
worse than the national poverty rate of 25% among Native American women (Caiazza &
Shaw, 2004).

The state ranked 48th nationally and 7th regionally for women’s political
participation (Werkshal & Williams, 2004). Interestingly however, women are relatively
well represented at the polls. Women exceeded the national percentage of men voting in
both the 1998 and 2000 election, with 50.1% voting in 1998 and 56.6% in 2000
compared with national proportions of 42.4% and 56.2% respectively. Although in most
states women exceed the percentage of men voting, this does not hold true in South
Dakota where voter rates for men are slightly higher. South Dakota ranked nineteenth
among all states for women’s voter turnout in the 1998 and 2000 elections combined
(Caiazza & Shaw, 2004).

The state fell dramatically in its rank among other states when comparing the
number of women who served as elected officials. South Dakota ranked 39th in 2008 with
a state total of 18 women (17.1%) serving in the state legislature compared to a national
percentage of 23.6%. The highest percentage, 24.8% or a total of 26 women were elected
to the state legislature in 1991, at which time South Dakota ranked 10th nationwide. The
decline in 2008 was due to both fewer women currently in office, and the higher percentage of women serving in this capacity in other states (CAWP, 2008).

The same lack of women’s presence in political leadership was also obvious in the South Dakota educational system. Women constituted only 14.29% superintendent positions in the state in 2007-08 and Females are under-represented as principals in South Dakota at the high school level. Reported by the South Dakota Department of Education, (2008) of the 161 public districts with a high school, only 29 (17.8%) are led by women, compared with the national average of 26% in 2004 (NCES, 2007). The percentage of female middle school principals was slightly higher with 19%. At the elementary level, 50.6% of South Dakota principals were female, slightly lower than the national average of 56% (NCES, 2007).

Women and Leadership Styles

The timing of this study coincided with a historical first as Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton positioned herself to become the first female president. The rhetoric addressing her leadership ability was centered on her display of “traditional” female characteristics. A Washington Post columnist expounded, “The driving factor in the way women leaders are perceived, experiments show, is not that they are any more ruthless than men who get to the top, but that people have strong and often unconscious conceptions about men, women and the nature of leadership” (Vedantam, 2007).

Women leaders find the attention to their ‘femaleness’ disturbing. Another female politician, 1999 presidential candidate Elizabeth Dole experienced similar scrutiny from the media specific to her gender. She was candid in her frustration with the attention brought to issues outside of her leadership ability to include personality traits,
appearance, and family life—analysis not directed nearly as much at male candidates (Heldman, Carroll, & Olson, 2005).

Similarly, the former CEO of Hewlett Packard, Carly Fiorina protested, “When I finally reach the top, after striving my entire career to be judged by results and accomplishments, the coverage of my gender, my appearance, and the perceptions of my personality would vastly outweigh anything else” (Fiorina, 2006, p. 173).

Stereotypical ideas about women that achieve leadership roles are prevalent. The Caliper (2005) study specifically focused on the personality qualities and motivational factors they viewed as being at the core of the underlying gender differences. Fifty-nine women in top managerial positions across the world were surveyed. A comparison to male leaders with similar job titles resulted in four specific findings.

The first finding was that women were more persuasive than their male counterparts. The women leaders scored significantly higher than male leaders in persuasive motivation, assertiveness, willingness to risk, empathy, urgency, flexibility and sociability. The ability for women to be able to perceive things from multiple views of a situation gave them the unique advantage of reading situations perceptively. Women exhibit genuine caring and understanding about others well being, thus they are better able to influence others to their points of view (Caliper, 2005).

The second finding stated that although women leaders may feel the sting of rejection, they are able to learn from adversity and carry on with an "I’ll show you" attitude. Women possess stronger interpersonal skills of empathy, flexibility and sociability and are more assertive than male counterparts. This combination of traits enabled women to express a unique approach toward dealing with rejection or situations
that do not work out as planned. Similarly, Langford (1995) found women to be flexible making them better equipped to handle organizational problems.

The inclusiveness and collaboration identified by Aburdene and Naisbitt (1985) as well as Regan and Brooks (1995) was supported by the third major finding from the Caliper (2005) study. Women leaders demonstrated an inclusive, team building leadership style of problem-solving and decision-making. The women leaders studied were more interested in hearing all points of view before making the best possible decision. Listening was a strong trait allowing women to learn and reflect before implementing a plan that did not need to correlate with their own initial point of view. This finding was aligned to Regan and Brooks (1995) who identified women to have strong collaboration attributes.

The final finding identified in the Caliper (2005) study revealed that women were more likely to ignore the rules and take risks. This finding mirrored results by Regan and Brooks (1995) that women were willing to set out on untraditional paths and take risks. The Caliper study found women to have a sense of urgency in getting things done and thus were inclined to push back when bound by rules or regulations. They were willing to run the risk of being wrong in the effort of completing a task.

An extensive survey of over 2,200 executives in 13 countries (Accenture, 2007) both men and women respondents ranked the top five most important characteristics of an effective leader: a) calm during a crisis, b) decisive, c) aware of his/her weaknesses, d) gives credit to others, and e) concerned about the welfare of employees. However, about half of men and women identified certain character traits as being either more distinctly masculine or feminine. Both were more likely to associate women with some of the
traditionally “softer” leadership skills, such as being aware of one’s own weaknesses, giving credit to others, and being concerned about the welfare of employees and associated men with such characteristics as being decisive and leading by asserting authority. Being visionary was seen as a more masculine characteristic, while being ethical was considered a more feminine trait.

Previous literature supported that women rely on different skills to lead. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1985) suggested that women bring a style of management into the work force that is more caring and intuitive than that of their male counterparts. Males, leading with the traditional approach, are characterized by control, rigidity and chain of command. Women offer openness, inclusion and empowerment for employees. In this type of organizational structure, leadership is valued over management and emphasizes collaboration, consensus building, and empowerment (Wesson & Grady, 1994).

Regan and Brooks (1995) work is grounded in relational leadership, offering five common feminist attributes that arose as they listened to stories of women’s experiences of leadership. Regan and Brooks found women’s behavior as inclusive and collaborative. They defined collaboration as "the ability to work in a group, eliciting and offering support to each other member, creating a synergistic environment for everyone." (1996, p. 26) Women reach out to people, ask for help when needed, gather opinions, and collaborate to get the job done. Langford (1995) found feminine leaders well equipped to handle organizational problems because they are creative, flexible, and exhibit an orientation towards people.
The second attribute was caring (Regan & Brooks, 1995). They understood caring as "the development of an affinity for the world and the people in it, translating moral commitment to action on behalf of others" (p. 27).

Regan and Brooks' (1995) third attribute was courage, which was reflected in findings in the Caliper (2005) surveys. Regan and Brooks defined courage as the "capacity to move ahead into the unknown, testing new ideas in the world of practice" (p. 27-28). They found that the women studied had the ability to move ahead to the unknown, testing new ideas in their own worlds of practice. They were risk takers and often set out in non-traditional paths, confronting the risk of failure. These women were willing to struggle to apply a different set of rules, and then go to on to change things when it became apparent that the rules differed from their core values as women.

The fourth attribute, intuition, is defined as “the ability to give equal weight to experience and abstraction, mind and heart” (Regan & Brooke, 1995, p. 33). Intuition, a natural mental ability, is associated strongly with experience. Regan and Brooks stated that women tend to place a greater trust in their intuition as they build on their experiences.

The last attribute, vision, is “the ability to formulate and express original ideas, enabling others to consider options in new and different ways” (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 36). The women studied had the ability to move ahead to the unknown, give equal weight to mind and heart, and enabled others to consider options in new and different ways.

The debate about leadership style and differences between males and females has been an ongoing topic for decades as this limited research indicates. Several researchers,
however, disagreed with generalizations about women’s distinctive leadership styles. Bass (1981) wrote, “The preponderance of available evidence is that no consistently clear pattern of differences can be discerned in the supervisory style of female as compared to male leaders” (p. 499). The lack of differences between male and female leadership styles and effectiveness were also supported in later studies (Powell, 1990, & Morrison & von Glinow, 1990).

Robinson (2004) suggested that women should blend the best of both male and female characteristics into a “stroft” approach. Stroft was defined as a “blend of strong and soft leadership skills” (p. 151). People skills are often considered to be soft skills while those of budgets, discipline and negotiations are considered hard skills. It was suggested that both skill types are necessary to thrive in the current school environment.

Women who have achieved a position of power bristle at the insinuations of acting “just like a man”. However, juxtaposition was suggested by journalist Michael Sokolove’s description of the leadership style of Mike Krzyzewski, head coach of the Duke University basketball team. Sokolove stated, “So what is the secret to Krzyzewski’s success? For starters, he coaches the way a woman would. Really” (Sokolove, 2006, p. 98).

**Women and Support Systems**

A factor that can slow women’s progress through their labyrinths is the feeling of isolation without a mentor along the path to success. Hill and Ragland (1995) cited the lack of mentoring as a contemporary barrier. They found that mentoring, which can increase a woman’s career opportunities and political savvy, was often lacking for a variety of reasons.
First, potential male mentors are not intuitive to women interested in leading. Second, in some organizations, cross gender mentoring was discouraged because such relationships could potentially be misconstrued as something more than career support. Third, they found that many women in influential positions lacked understandings of the power and processes of mentoring behavior. Further, Hill and Ragland found that women in certain educational areas or in specific school districts did not have the time to be engaged or did not recognize the value of the mentoring role in the scope of their careers. Due to the lack of mentoring, the women in Hill and Ragland’s (1995) study expressed the common thread of feeling that they were “the only one” or that they were alone throughout their career.

The lack of mentoring affects women’s choices as they are often not exposed to a variety of options as they enter their careers. Females often fall into traditional “female” professions as they better allow women to combine work and family roles more easily than “male” professions (Eccles, 1994; Ware & Lee, 1988). Additionally, the costs and benefits of family are weighted prior to making an occupational choice (Eccles, 1994; Novack & Novack, 1996).

**Summary**

There is clearly a large gap of under-representation in both the political and educational arenas for women yet today. The well known phrase of “You’ve come a long way, baby”, appears to have escaped both of these segments of society of women today in South Dakota. Both politics and education are extremely visible to the public eye and scrutiny, and thus provide synergy within the dynamics of communities, states, and national policy. Political decisions are constantly at play with educational policy.
Educational policy is enforced at the local level. Society suffers when neither politics nor education has an equitable distribution of female input and influence.

Similar research exists explaining “why” women have not pursued the path of politics and educational leadership due to either possible or perceived barriers, however, little research has focused on those women that are part of the minority in the roles of leadership in both politics and education. More specifically, no research other than statistical analysis of involvement in politics and the educational leadership has been attempted for women involved in leadership roles in South Dakota.

In this study, the purpose was to determine the personal and professional experiences of strong females in their pathways to leadership in South Dakota during a time that was less supportive of women in leadership roles. The life histories of the women within this work ascertained the work experiences, academic achievement, and lifestyle choices that characterized their ascension to the political or educational leadership roles. It also explores the presence of role models and mentors for these females. This study highlighted women who embraced leadership and throughout their journeys. These females offered their perceptions of the barriers they encountered as they wound through their labyrinths to success. For women to fully understand who they are as women and how they lead, they need to hear the voices of women who have paved the way and made a difference.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of the life-history study was to explore the career pathways of three female leaders in both educational and political fields in South Dakota. Specifically, to identify the traits and opportunities guiding them to their positions of leadership.

Research Questions

The central phenomenon of the study was based on the question: “What are the experiences and events that lead three women to positions of leadership in South Dakota?”

Sub-questions of the study included:

1. What were the support systems for these women along their career paths?
2. What if any relationship did being female have to their perceived strengths and weaknesses?
3. How did specific events shape their career choices?
4. What influence did the culture of South Dakota have on their progression to a place of leadership?

Research Design

This study was life-history qualitative research, a form of case study that has its basis in explaining, describing and understanding social and human issues. Creswell (1998) described qualitative research as being conducted in the natural setting, seeking to create a holistic view of the phenomena. Stake (1995) stated that science attempts to best explain phenomena with aggregates of population rather than the uniqueness of
individual lives. He sees the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods as a matter of emphasis as they are both mixtures. Case study research becomes the method of specimens when the intent is to know extensively and intensively about a single case. There is no intention to generalize to the larger group, but rather to understand the intricacies of this particular specimen. Creswell (2002) further explained qualitative research as “an exploration and understanding of a central phenomenon” (p. 50).

Qualitative research lends itself to open-ended and broad questions that enable the participants to share their views about the problem being studied (Creswell, 2002). Qualitative research questions often begin with “how” or “what”, leading to an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The research questions in this study began with “what” and “how”, thus suggesting the need for exploration and discovery (Creswell, 1998). Both case studies and multi-case studies are usually studies of particularization more than generalization (Stake, 2006).

This particular study used the multi-case method; the intention was to entice women to share their unique stories. The official interest is in the collection of the cases or the collection of phenomena exhibited in the collection of the cases. Stake (2006) refers to this collection as a “quintain”. He further explained that the quintain is that which the researcher wants to understand more thoroughly and thus chooses to study it through cases, by means of a multi-case study. Yin (1989) cautioned that every case within a study should serve a specific purpose within the overall scope of the study. He stated, “Here, a major insight is to consider multiple cases as one would consider multiple experiments – that is, to follow a replication logic” (p. 53). This multi-case study is a
collection of women in former leadership positions within the two intertwined realms, education and politics in South Dakota.

The study explored the participants’ career progression as they dealt with adversity and opportunities. Their stories provided common themes that emphasized the intricate pathways they followed as they became respected and established leaders in South Dakota.

Selection of the Cases

Due to my lifelong involvement in both areas of education and politics in the small state of South Dakota, I thought it important to not rely on myself in choosing individuals for the study. I was immediately able to name women in both roles that were regarded across the state as strong female leaders. Being able to understand the critical phenomena depends on choosing the cases well (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 1994). To ensure my own interests were not biasing the research study, I asked three males in positions of either educational or political leadership, to identify the females in the state of South Dakota that stood out as political or educational leaders. Interestingly, all three individuals named four of the women that I had initial interest in including in the study, but they also broadened the scope to include over 25 women; eight of them I had no affiliation with or knowledge.

Stake (2006) presented three main criteria for selecting cases: (a) Is the case relevant to the quintain? (b) Do the cases provide diversity across contexts?, and (c) Do the cases provide good opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts? The major focus in this study was women who had attained positions of leadership, thus providing relevance to the quintain. Three women were chosen who emerged in two different
contexts of leadership; politics and education thus providing diversity. Stake spoke to the value of diversity in a multi-case study. “An important reason for doing the multi-case study is to examine how the program or phenomenon performs in different environments. When cases are selected carefully, the design of a study can incorporate a diversity of contexts” (Stake, 2006, p. 23). While each of the three females began in traditional careers within education, they were inducted into the world of politics at some occasion on the pathway and in different capacities. This provided the opportunity to learn of the complexity of their paths to leadership and the context in which it occurred.

**Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher interacts directly with the participants and is therefore the primary instrument for the collection of the data. The multiple roles of the researcher in this study are ones of an observer, interviewer, coder, data manager, and interpreter (Stake 2006).

In qualitative research, it is important the researcher has a number of basic skills. Yin (1989) lists these as being able to (a) ask good questions, (b) be a good listener, (c) be adaptive and flexible, (d) have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, and (e) unbiased by preconceived notions. However, Merriam (1988) reminded us that qualitative case study research is human, thus “all observations, analyses are filtered through ones’ world view, ones’ values, ones’ perspectives” (p. 39).

Marshall & Rossman (1999) declared the researcher as the instrument. The researcher enters the lives of the participants in one way or another in qualitative studies. As a result it brings with it a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues that are not present in quantitative studies.
The responsibilities included;

1. Ensuring the participants understood the purpose of the study and all the elements in the Informed Consent Form;

2. Being well informed about the methodology used to obtain, report, and interpret the data;

3. Taking advantage of unexpected opportunities rather than being trapped by them (Yin, 1989); and

4. Having sensitivity to ethical issues that may have influenced the study’s outcomes (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Data Gathering Method

Qualitative researchers typically use four methods for gathering information: (a) participation in a setting, (b) direct observations, (c) in-depth interviewing, and (d) analyzing documents and materials (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The primary method used in this study was an in-depth interview with rich supporting documentation from other sources and individuals. The interest leading to this study was direct observations of these participants in their many roles as leaders. The early stages of this research included a broad area interest without a particular checklist, a strategy that is quite common in qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). These observations were a basis to formulate the questions that became part of the formal in-depth interview process.

Participants were initially contacted by phone to inform them of the purpose, procedures, and nature of the study. Upon consent, participants were sent a copy of the informed consent and a letter of explanation. The issue of anonymity was discussed with each individual and made clear that due to the low population and high status of the
participants in South Dakota, anonymity could not be assured. Each woman agreed to full
disclosure. Email addresses were requested for future correspondence. Upon return of the
consent form, each participant was contacted via email for the purpose of setting up an
interview. In order to prepare, each participant was sent the interview protocol
approximately two weeks before the initial interview.

Questions were open-ended to permit the participants to answer from their points
of view and to voice their experiences free of the perspectives of the researcher
(Creswell, 2002).

An on-site, one-on-one interview was conducted for each participant. The
questions and responses were audio-taped, and brief notes were also taken during the
interviews. These notes were recorded on an interview protocol form.

A review of the various documents served as a second source of data. Prior to the
interview, in both the phone contact and e-mail correspondence, participants were asked
if they would be willing to provide documents that might support the research. These
could be public or private documents. These written materials included newspapers,
online articles, testimonies from outside individuals, and saved documents from the
participants. One of the values of content analysis is its unobtrusiveness and non-
reactiveness (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). It also provides a rich source of information
without the researcher influencing the participants (Creswell, 2002). Information from
these would be recorded to further support evidence of the important roles these women
play in the educational and political realms in South Dakota.
Data Analysis Procedures

The goal of the analysis of qualitative data is to discover patterns, ideas, explanations and understandings (McMillan, 2000). It is a search for general statements about the relationships among categories of data and builds grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Data analysis is described by McMillan (2000) as requiring organization, summarization, and interpretation of the data. Marshall and Rossman (1999) views analytic procedure in six phases: a) organizing the data; b) generating categories, themes, and patterns; c) coding the data; d) testing the emergent understandings; e) searching for alternative explanations; and f) writing the report (p. 152).

A thorough transcription of the interviews was done. The data were organized with computer files and file folders. Large amounts of data are naturally gathered during a study and organization of the data is critical (Creswell, 2002). Each audio recording was labeled and following transcription, stored in a fire-proof safe. Interview transcriptions were saved on disk and backed-up.

Preliminary exploratory analysis provided a general sense of the data, opportunities to memo ideas, think about the organization and to consider whether more data is needed (Creswell, 2002). Continuous sorting and evaluation of data occurs until a point is reached in which a theme is fully developed, saturation is reached, and new evidence will not provide additional insight (Creswell, 1998 & 2002). The assembling and reassembling of the data is referred to as axial coding where one open-coded category is placed at the center of the process and relates the other categories to it (Creswell, 1998 & 2002). Marshall and Rossman (1999) emphasized that coding should not be simply a technical task. Instead as the researcher codes data, new understanding
may well emerge that may necessitate changes in the original plan. Finally, a storyline develops from the varying themes that have developed. Creswell (1998 & 2002) refers to this final step as *selective coding* from which the final reporting of findings is written.

**Validating the Accuracy of Findings**

Several qualitative researchers have addressed the idea of the validation of findings. The researcher determines the credibility of the findings through various strategies. Eight verification strategies are associated with qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000) include: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review/debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checks, rich, thick description, and external audits. Creswell (1994) recommends a minimum of two procedures for verification.

This study verified findings by using three different methods: triangulation, member checking, and external audit. Triangulation is a strategy used to assure that the researcher does not merely depend on intuition and good intention to “get it right” (Stake, 1995, p. 197). Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data or methods of data collection. Conclusions in a study are more convincing when corroborated through multiple sources of information (Yin, 1989). In order to triangulate data, I used data from the in-depth interviews, observations, newspaper articles – both hard copy and online, past testimony from meetings, and documents given to me from participants.

Member checking is another method where researchers check their findings with the participants in the study to determine if the findings are accurate (Creswell, 2000). Stake (1995) further expounds on member checking by referring to the participants as not
only acting in the case but also directing the case study. In the process, the “actor is asked to review the material for accuracy and palatability” (Stake, 1995, p. 115). The participants are asked if the descriptions are complete and realistic, if the themes are accurate, and the interpretations are fair and representative (Creswell, 2000). This multi-case study relied on the participants to read the transcripts and provide necessary corrections.

An external audit was conducted on this multi-case study. An external audit consisted of the researcher obtaining the services of an individual outside the study to review the different aspects of the research. The external audit allowed the auditor to examine both the process and product of the study to determine accuracy (Merriam, 1988). The questions typically asked by auditors are mentioned by Schwandt and Halpern (1988) as cited in Creswell (2000, p. 281):

1. Are the findings grounded in the data?
2. Are inferences logical?
3. Are the themes appropriate?
4. Can inquiry decisions and methodological shifts be justified?
5. What is the degree of the researcher bias?
6. What strategies are used for increasing credibility?

The findings from the external audit were reported as part of the dissertation.

**The Qualitative Narrative**

Telling these women’s stories to accurately reflect these women’s lives was imperative. There is no one standard for the writing of qualitative narrative, although several researchers have given suggestions on the organization of qualitative research
narratives. Stake (1995) suggested an entry vignette, followed by the purpose and method of the study, an extensive narrative description, development of the issues, triangulation of the documentation for the issues and assertions, and finally, a closing vignette. I chose to vary this method with an extensive narrative description, developing issues and triangulating where necessary. Assertions for each segment of the narratives were represented in italics as not to interrupt the flow of the story. This style of narrative writing lends itself well to the rich stories told by these women.
A labyrinth is an ancient meditative art form that relates to wholeness. Its path helps walkers circle inward to the center of their soul. At its most basic level the labyrinth is a metaphor for the journey to the center of one’s deepest self and back out into the world with a broadened understanding of who one becomes. The labyrinth’s center represents moving toward a goal. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. With a labyrinth there is only one choice to be made. The choice is to enter or not (Labyrinth in Wikipedia, 2008).

The Entrance to the Labyrinth: Introduction

A Teacher of the Year, Secretary of Education, Interim Director of the state’s largest Technical School, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, members of
the State Board of Education as well as president, first woman principal in state’s largest high school, and fund raising millions of dollars. These were all honorable accomplishments, but even more admirable when these accomplishments reflected the professional lives of three amazing women. And these are but a few of their accomplishments. Three women’s stories emerged from an era that may have strongly influenced who and what they became. Growing up in traditional hard-working families with conservative family values was typical of the time in which the baby-boomer generation had its roots. The participants deftly navigated through the twists and turns of the labyrinth in an epoch when women were seeking to find their way. In the conservative culture of the mid-western state of South Dakota, these women were pioneers. They were visionary and strong and they continually enhanced themselves for the purpose of helping those who needed assistance. They emerged from similar backgrounds and time periods, they collectively desired to make a difference, and they did. Their wisdom and courage to take on roles not previously dared by females in South Dakota was the impetus to explore what made these three women different from others and from each other. The conservative culture of South Dakota may have influenced some women to decide to not enter the labyrinth towards leadership. This was not the case for these aggressive females.

Meandering through Childhood

Glenna Fouberg

As Glenna walks into a room, she exudes an air of liveliness. She is armed with a bag of homemade goodies, knitting needles, and a gift or card for someone she has recently remembered as a gesture of kindness. Not able to sit still, she knits furiously
through meetings, and does not hesitate to state her opinions on issues, but not without
thoughtful analysis. Those who work with her are aware of her passion for the proper use
of the English language, and she is quick to point out a grammatical error with a wry
comment and quick smile to follow.

Her feisty personality was not created overnight which is obvious from many of
her early childhood memories. Her take charge characteristics and determination were
exhibited as a young child:

I was born in 1942 and I was raised like an only child. My mom was 46
the day after I was born and my siblings were significantly older. We
lived on a farm until age four and moved into town. I was raised in a small
community in North Dakota and I played school with two boys and I was
always the teacher and always in charge. I learned to ride a bike at age five
and I was always very determined.

Glenna’s independence was obvious throughout her young years. “I charged a
pair of roller skates at age five at the hardware store and never really considered how I
was going to explain that to my dad. I was always in charge even at a young age.”

Music was an important part of her life but it was not enough to just participate,
but also important to do well and be the best:

I was active in band. I believe I started in grade four and played
saxophone and in the 9th grade also added the oboe. I was part of a
woodwind quintet and also part of saxophone quintet which did cut a
record and loaned it out and never got it back! We won many contests.

Glenna continued with the same wry animation:
When I started oboe in the 9th grade, our instructor decided that in the spring of that year I would do a solo at an international band contest in Moosejaw, Saskatchewan. The worst part of that is that he changed his mind while we were traveling and I learned a new solo on the bus. I pulled it off and received the highest rating. Way more guts than brains, even then! Oh, and I taught piano and was church organist. I actually started playing for church at the ripe old age of 12!

With her characteristic sense of humor, Glenna talked about her involvement in activities throughout her school years. “I was an African American Maid in a play in sixth grade. They gave me a permanent and I have a bit of naturally curly hair, so you can imagine what I looked like!”

Jan Nicolay

Upon first meeting Jan, her straightforward manner is prevalent. Jan did not hesitate to describe her personality, “I am candid and not afraid to tell people my position.” This brazenness was exhibited at the young age of three with her own father, whom she greatly respected. “I lived with my grandmother and mother until age three as my dad was in World War II and I grew up with two independent women. In fact, I told my dad to leave when he returned and that we didn’t need him!” she remembered with a hearty laugh.

Jan was also born in 1942, a time that had significant impact on her. Her grandmother and mother modeled independence and self-reliance as she grew up. Both of those characteristics were obvious in Jan’s personality. She smiled proudly as she talked about these important women in her life. “Both my grandmother and mother were strong
independent self-reliant women. This taught me to stand up for myself. Mother did not force the girls to be domestic, but instead to be self reliant."

Jan had a traditional and supportive family, and related numerous incidences where she was required to be responsible:

I was the oldest child and we had a very close family. I have four siblings and one passed away. My mother stayed home and but she could repair or fix anything and did not drive until I was almost 15-16 years old which, seems odd with her independence. Mom made sure family ate together for the family meal and we all had responsibilities. Mother set a standard for keeping things up.

Jan had great respect for her father who made personal sacrifices to make certain his children were raised in a good environment. Jan’s respect for her father was obvious in her demeanor as she related,

My dad was in the gas station business and we were all responsible for helping. We moved to North Platte, Nebraska and he worked for Bell Telephone. We then returned to Watertown, South Dakota for high school where dad returned to the gas station business. Dad turned down promotions as he felt it was important to stay in a small community. He taught us as kids to be independent.

Jan exhibited her independence as she entered the working world as a teenager:

I had my first job at 14 at A & W and before that, I babysat. I had to put money away in savings for my parents. I spent a great deal of time in Fedora, SD with relatives on the farm and learned to drive tractors and
milk and chickens – all the things that were valuable in helping me to learn about other’s lives.

Jan’s parents showed their confidence and trust in her as a teenager as she explained, “My parents moved to Sioux Falls in my senior year in 1960 and I stayed in Watertown to graduate. I worked in the school office to pay tuition since they were not living there.”

Jan’s parents modeled the quality of giving back to society, a trait that Jan continued to exhibit throughout her life. “Throughout my childhood, my parents had other kids stay with us and taught us to share and respect others that had less and had life tougher than we did.”

Karon Schaack

Karon can be described as a strong and confident woman whose presence is calming. She was once portrayed by a former colleague as the ‘consummate professional’. Karon’s reflective demeanor does little justice to the impact she had in the Department of Education in South Dakota over the years

Karon was conscientious even as a young girl and she attributed her birth order to influencing her responsible behavior. Karon began her life story in the context of the period of time in which she was raised:

I am the oldest of five children and born 1942 and felt that it was a significant period during WWII. I think that that period of time shaped me as it probably did others in the 1950’s. I was born a few months after Pearl Harbor and my childhood was a time where there were sacrifices to be made on home front. That colored how things were in the 50’s. There was
sort of this sense of everyone pulling together and getting back on their feet. There was still the threat of the communists coming and we were all fearful of that.

Karon’s life was much like the other two women with traditional families, but her childhood was strongly impacted by her religious background:

I grew up and lived in Watertown, South Dakota. My dad was merchant and mom stayed at home and we were the typical 50’s “Leave it to Beaver” family. I went to a Catholic school and my whole life revolved around the church and its teachings, the nuns, and doing well in school. It really was my parents’ social group, the church that is. I would imagine it was rather typical of that era.

Music and work consumed much of Karon’s free time. Her strong work ethic was shaped through experiences starting in 4th grade:

I took music lessons during elementary and junior high from about 1948 to 1955, but was not involved in a lot else as compared to today. The public library was important at that time for us. I started part-time work when old enough to work or when my parents thought I was. In the 4th grade I worked for dad in the grocery store. In high school, I worked in local radio station after school and on Saturdays.

Karon analyzed her place in the birth order and believed it had a strong influence in her life:

I was the oldest of five children as I said before and being the oldest in the family is part of who you are and influences who you are. Being the
oldest makes a difference. However, a lot of child care fell on me due to birth order as it seemed my mother was always pregnant and always sick. There are a lot of family legends about me taking care of the rest of my siblings!

Collecting Thoughts on Childhoods

The childhood of these three women were not unique in any aspect to the time in which they were born and raised. Responsibility, hard work, and traditional family values were common to all three girls throughout their childhoods.

Winding Through High School

Some labyrinths appear to draw energy, which was not present before. This has been determined by dowsing the area before and after the labyrinth was built (Artress, 1995). It is possible to envision the energy of these three young women as they head eagerly through the entrance into the brightly lit labyrinth towards high school. The push to excel in school was a common thread among all three women. While their parents had limited educations themselves, they were adamant about their own children’s success in academics and pushed them to go on to college. However, it would be safe to surmise that no one would have guessed the impact these women would have later in their lives at this stage of their journeys.

Glenna reminisced about the importance her parents placed on education as she was growing up:

Books were extremely important in growing up as they are now. These were gifts as a child. I went to school in Ashley, North Dakota and graduated with honors in 1960. I took curriculum that was difficult.
Mother had a 3rd grade and father an 8th grade education, however, education was very important. They always assumed that I would go to college. My siblings all have degrees as well.

The push to do well in school was equally important to Jan’s parents, with strong influence from her father:

I studied hard as it was embedded and took the hardest classes. Another thing that I found valuable was Latin – it was so critical for command of the language. Dad was very strict about good grades. He was well-read and knowledgeable although he had not completed high school. My parents pushed college but didn’t push a career and we had to go at our own expense.

Jan shared that her parents had different goals for encouraging her to go on to college, stating, “Dad pushed education and all my siblings went into education. Mother pushed education so we were independent.”

Karon completed her first eight grades at a parochial school and also found value in the Latin classes she took:

I attended the Catholic school through 8th grade and I then went on to public school after 9th grade. I attended Watertown High School from 1956-1960. I took Latin in high school and think that Latin had a huge influence on my understanding of the English language and sentence construction, root words, and I did not think of it as an opportunity at the time but definitely later.
Karon’s father was the only one who had completed high school, and excelling in school was very important to him:

Dad graduated from high school in the middle or end of dirty 30’s and he was encouraged to go to college but there was no way financially to do so as he needed contribute to the family. Dad was adamant that his five children were to do well in school and they were all going to college from the beginning and they were not just going to go, but to do well. This was a huge personal accomplishment for my father who took great pride in this.

Involvement in high school activities was similar for all three girls during that time period. While music consumed a significant amount of time for Glenna and Karon, Jan was honest in relaying, “I was not good at the fine arts but accepted that early on.”

High school proved to lay the groundwork for involvement of leadership activities for all three females. Glenna stated in a matter fact way, “I was always in a position of leadership in all organizations I belonged to and still am! I was a class officer each year in high school and president in my senior year.” She was also active in numerous school activities to include the annual and newspaper staff, Future Homemakers Association, and Thespians. Her involvement in those groups was not enough. “I was usually president at some time or another.”

In addition to leadership experiences, Glenna also involved herself in the arts through music and plays and shared with a laugh, “I played the lead in both the junior and senior class plays. I remember one play where I played Mother Superior. Rather out of character I believe!”
Jan talked about the leadership abilities she exhibited as a young adult. “I was involved in lots of activities in high school. I ran for classroom president and I really am not sure how that all started. I am not sure how I got involved in leadership roles. I was always a class officer most years in some position or another.”

Both Jan and Karon attended the same high school in Watertown, South Dakota. They participated together in the debate program and Jan shared,

Debate was a big plus in high school. I was not the most successful but those experiences were extremely valuable. Drama and oral interpretation strengthened my confidence and were valuable experiences. At that time, there were no athletics for girls.

Karon also saw the value of her debate experiences in high school explaining,

I was on the debate team in Watertown, South Dakota High School from 1957-1960. Debate at Watertown High was/is a quite extensive and renowned program that competed multi-state, and is aligned closely to the National Forensic League and its standards of achievement. This provided another avenue for traveling and competition and bringing home trophies or just missing first place – it gave me a taste of success and competitiveness. Debate proved to be a success or almost success sometimes. I learned early on that the value of work was important. As a result of the sometimes painful piano lessons from nuns, I was the church organist for school choir which taught me the lessons of timeliness and preparation. I continued on as soloist and accompanist.
Karon and Jan attended the same high school and were elected as officers in their senior class. Karon explained, “I had a lot of leadership opportunities in high school clubs; National Honor Society, Student Council, student government and other class leadership opportunities. I was vice president in my senior class in 1959-1960 and in case you didn’t know, Jan Nicolay was president!

Collecting Thoughts on High School

Education was extremely important to all three women who were pushed by their parents to excel and to do their best. High school was comprised of music, debate, jobs, and leadership roles. They were naturally placed into leadership positions but unaware of how these incidents would help to prepare them for future opportunities. At this stage of their lives, the women appeared to be at similar turns in the labyrinth but unable to see beyond the next bend pointing to college.

Understanding the Labyrinth

A labyrinth is composed of four parts; the mouth, the path or circuit, the walls, and the goal. The path is composed of twists and turns, but the end result is the same for all those who enter – it results in leaving where one began. The walls help to keep one on the path. The center of the labyrinth provides an opportunity for thoughtful reflection before leaving (Labyrinth, in Wikipedia, 2008).
Diagram 2: Understanding the Labyrinth

The Circuitous Path to College

College was not considered an option for these three young women who had strong encouragement from home to attend. What was unclear as they entered that part of the journey was their career choice. This part of the expedition pushed these women towards the center of their labyrinths as they explored career goals. Options for women were seemingly limited in the early 60’s and career guidance was not available. Although all three women ended up in the field of education, teaching was not a calling for either Jan or Karon, and appeared the logical choice for Glenna.

Glenna talked about her choice to enter teaching, explaining, “I grew up with the idea that you go to college. I borrowed to go. There were teachers in my family and not a lot of options in 1960; women were nurses, secretaries, or teachers. I had grown up playing school with neighborhood kids.” Glenna switched colleges as a sophomore, but still managed to be done in three years:

I started in North Dakota State and moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota to complete college at Northern State University. I transferred in my
sophomore year and finished in the next two years because I was putting
myself through college. I had a double major and held down various jobs
so I didn’t participate in activities to any degree. My first year in college,
I was a member of the concert band and woodwind quintet and also
student senate. I played 1st chair oboe and was part of the orchestra for
South Pacific and played oboe and English Horn.

Glenna was not content to settle with a bachelor’s degree. “I completed my degree
in three years and graduated in 1963 with a degree in English and social science. I
received a master’s in guidance and counseling in 1968 and a psychological examiner’s
endorsement later.”

Glenna’s choice to get her master’s degree was due to a change in her husband’s
plans, which was advantageous for her later in life as she explained, “My decision to get
my master’s degree was a result of my husband talking about it and then deciding not to.
So I did instead. There were not many women in the master’s program in 1967-68 and of
those that were there, they were older.”

Jan did not question whether she should attend college, but struggled with her
career choice. Whereas social work was her first degree choice, Jan switched majors and
at the same time changed colleges in her sophomore year as she explained,

My parents pushed college but didn’t push a career and we had to go at
our own expense. I started in social work at USD (University of South
Dakota) for one year and then to NSU (Northern State University) to
complete a teaching degree. I had no particular plan. I started out trying to
help people in my social work background. It was embedded in me from
my parents. I realized after some classes that I had the ability and was
refocused to become a teacher. I never went to school thinking I was going
to be a teacher but it happened. The change was really due to
conversations with other students that helped me decide on teaching in
addition to an aunt who was my role model. I went to school year round
and got done in three years. I achieved my masters degree 1971 at SDSU
and later added an administrative degree.

Like Jan, Karon did not enter college with teaching in mind and graduated with a
degree outside of education. “I went to USD (University of South Dakota) for four years
(1960-1964) and majored in broadcast journalism.” When this degree did not lead to a
job due to location, Karon chose to go into teaching:

I went back to school to get a teaching certificate in 1966. It was a
practical decision to get teaching degree and NOT a calling, so I shopped
for a campus where it took the least amount of time to complete the
degree. I found out that I could attend SDSU for a semester worth of
classes, got a room in Brookings, and then student-taught in Watertown in
1966.

Karon recognized that the lack of knowledge of other career opportunities often
prevented women from entering career fields outside of what was considered the “norm”
for that era. She explained,

Although my parents really stressed going to college, they did not have
background to guide children into a career other than teaching or nursing.
I truly felt badly that one of my sisters, who had exceptional potential (which I recognize now as I look back) was not guided into other careers.

While both Glenna and Jan completed their advanced degrees along the way, Karon left this part of her life incomplete and expressed her regrets repeatedly throughout her story:

However, the most continuing and confounding thing in my whole life has been the failure to find a way to access further higher education in an easy way. I started on my master’s degree at SDSU which consisted of nights and summers. I finished coursework for my masters in English and began the research and preliminary writing for my thesis.

Karon went on to explain that her efforts were cut short with the loss of a child at birth as she tells sadly, “I experienced a tremendous struggle to overcome my grief and rebound as a loving mother and wife. The emotions prevented me, it seems, from concentrating on my research and writing. And the months passed with no progress.” This ongoing struggle to complete her master’s degree was a recurring but important part of Karon’s story throughout her life that continued to unfold throughout her life story.

Collecting Thoughts on College

As these women approached the curves leading to their careers, the paths in the labyrinths materialized before them as narrow with limited choices. Glenna appeared to take the most direct course, choosing teaching and moving on to an advanced degree within a short period of time. Jan’s original passageway into social work deviated a bit, however, she knew from the start she wanted to help others, and teaching became a back-up option. Karon moved cautiously ahead into teaching after determining that a
broadcast career had limited opportunities. She determined a career in teaching a convenience more than a calling, but later admitted her love for the profession. The obstacles presented to her in trying to obtain a master’s degree continued to haunt her throughout her career.

**Turning the Corner on Careers**

There is etiquette specific to traversing a labyrinth. If others are in the labyrinth, it is proper to permit them get beyond the first turn before entering to avoid bunching up. However, people walk at different rates and it is allowable to pass someone on the labyrinth. It is also deemed acceptable to stop or step aside if walking slower and allowing them to pass. The same applies when on the way out as others are on the way in. In the same manner, it is appropriate to use one’s own judgment to determine when and if it is appropriate to interact with others on the labyrinth (Artress, 1995).

These women were not content to always follow meekly behind others on their treks through their labyrinths. They moved determinedly and if necessary, politely passed others on the path that did not move quickly enough to get the job done or to make changes. The next phase of the chronicles relate the details of their careers, influences from family and compatriots, as well as events that helped to contour their fascinating lives.

As previously discussed, teaching became the career choice of the three females but in dissimilar approaches and through different influences. Anecdotally, all three obtained a degree in English.
Glenna

In customary Glenna style, she moved with speed and determination to get her career on its way and began with a traditional career in teaching:

I started teaching in 1963 in Sisseton, South Dakota for one year and then one year in Alaska in 1964. I returned, got married summer of 1965 and taught in Sisseton for two years. My husband was a county agent and then went into banking. I drove from Sisseton for three summers to get my master’s degree. I completed my degree in 1968 from Brookings. I taught in Webster and Bristol and moved to Aberdeen in 1971 and didn’t teach for one year. I started at Holgate Middle School in Aberdeen the next year in 1973.

Glenna discovered her fervor for working with struggling students. “For 17 years I taught low readers at Holgate and teamed up with the social science teacher. I then took on the challenge of the Alternative Program in 1990 for 13 years. They wrote a job description basically for me and I ended up with the same staff for the entire time.”

When asked about her career progression, Glenna explained that she took advantage of prospects throughout her passage, clarifying,

There was always an opportunity that came along when I needed it and I took advantage of it. I did my student teaching in Sisseton and took the language arts opening. I decided to go to Alaska and came back and there was a language arts opening and I got the job. There were always jobs along the way that I was able to take advantage of. I did an exchange program with a college professor in 1984, and it was the first of its kind. I
taught freshman composition at Northern. I continued as an adjunct faculty member at Northern after that year for five years.

Glenna had a unique influence on her students as she demonstrated genuine caring and compassion. A former eighth grade student described Mrs. Fouberg in an essay on the subject of her favorite teacher:

Mrs. Fouberg has all the qualities and characteristics that a good teacher should have. Her rotund body is held up by wee feet and undersized, stubby gams. … Despite her lack of height, her rotundness makes her appear formidable. Atop her torso is a winsome, effervescent face. Her jovial and convivial smile is very warming, which gladdens the hearts of her pupils. … Her rich, brown, sparkling eyes give her away when she is pretending to be angry with a student. These are located on the top one-third of her face. I’ve never seen the ones in the back of her head, but I now she has them. … To top it all off, she has frosty tresses. The frosting was a gift from her students, given only to the teachers who care. She is quick on the up-take, so it is hard to get away with anything, but she is jocular, so it is fun to be in her class (Former Student).

Glenna’s influence in the educational arena in South Dakota was just beginning at this phase in her life. Focus and passion contributed to the next significant twist in her move through her labyrinth towards leadership.
Jan’s teaching career started and ended in Sioux Falls, the largest city in South Dakota. Monitoring her path shows a woman who did more than just teach kids; she became intricately involved with students and became a strong advocate for teachers:

My first teaching job was at Edison Junior High in 1963 for 7th grade language arts with social studies and reading. I had job offers all over and the assistant superintendent in Sioux Falls helped me choose to go there due to his personality and felt I would be a good fit. I taught 15 years in junior high and ended up being the first women to coach outside of physical education where I coached girl’s basketball, track, volleyball, and gymnastics.

Jan had an ongoing zeal for students with special needs that continued late into her career. She spoke with conviction explaining,

There was no special education at that time. We sent all special needs kids to Edison and I ended up teaching those kids and developed a passion for those kids. I became an advocate for those types of kids. I remember this as a tough time in my career as I did not know how to let go of the kids and their problems.

Jan moved from junior high to high school teaching. “I went to Washington High School for five years and taught language arts and American government half time and became president of local teacher association part time.”

As a natural leader, Jan wanted to take her career to the next level as a principal. It was at this juncture of her career that she perceived discrimination due to her gender.
I was five years at Washington High School (as a teacher) when I applied for the assistant principal job at Patrick Henry Middle School in 1983. I was told because I was in legislature they did not want to give me the job. The true issue was that the principal was uncomfortable in giving me the job. He did not think I was able to handle discipline, and the teachers would not follow a female. I gained respect with the school board and they overturned the decision. I started new programs there and quit after five years. Washington High School opened up and I then applied there and got the job as principal in 1988 and I was there for nine years.

It was at this twist of Jan’s career when she was given the opportunity to seize the passion she had developed for needy students:

I then started the alternative high school in 1996 as a result of Superintendent Keegan. I was the principal at Washington and alternative school at the same time. I had 40 kids that had been out of school for a year. I became director of At Risk programs; the Alternative School, the Juvenile Detention program, the Limited English Proficiency programs and I was also on the At Risk Council.

Although Jan’s career was far from over, she finished her work as an administrator in the Sioux Falls School District in 1998. “I was asked to go to Roosevelt High School to clean things up for two years and I then retired. I cleaned things up and it was time to put someone in place that could stay.”

Jan was not content to simply teach. Her work with struggling students was a passion throughout her life which aligned with her goal at the start of her career to help
others. She had a lot to offer the state of South Dakota in educational and political leadership.

Karon

Karon’s entry into the workforce took a much different passageway than Jan and Glenna. With her sights set on finding her niche in broadcasting journalism, Karon talked candidly:

I got out of school with lots of big ideas and the first question that always asked (because I was female, I believe) was “can you type?” I then decided I had to try my wings and I went to California and worked in broadcasting for a year. However, like many females, I came back to South Dakota due to a relationship with my current husband who was the sports editor for local paper in Watertown. It was difficult getting a job in Watertown and thus I went back to school to get a teaching certificate in 1966. I student-taught in Watertown and I loved teaching yearbook, journalism, and English. I was offered a job in Watertown in the high school; however, during the summer my husband was offered a position at South Dakota State University and we moved to Brookings.

Karon’s first teaching job proved to be a very positive experience as she found the camaraderie of other professional teachers:

I got a teaching position at Brookings High School due to a late resignation; so I began teaching in Brookings High School in August 1966 and taught four years in Brookings. Those were important four years (1966-1970) for me, both for professional growth and colleagues that I
bonded with. It happened that there was a group of new faculty at the high school and we were all “in it together” I guess you would say.

It was during this period of time that Karon dealt with the initial frustrations related to attempting to complete her master’s degree.

I started on my master’s degree at South Dakota State University which consisted of nights and summers. I finished coursework for my master’s in English and began the research and preliminary writing for my thesis. My mentor advised me to take time off and start a family while doing the thesis. So I thought it was a good plan and I could devote a good amount of time to writing while away from the classroom.

Karon’s career progression was once again interrupted by changes to her husband’s job, “Southwest Minnesota State approached my husband with a job offer. I got pregnant, resigned from Brookings High School, and we moved to Marshall, Minnesota. School policy did not allow female teachers to continue teaching if pregnant.” She added with a roll of her eyes, “Remember, this was the 60’s!”

Karon was unable to hide the obvious emotions that so deeply impacted her during the next step in her journey as she shared,

The plan was that I would complete my master’s thesis during the next few months. I thought it was going to work out perfect. My baby one was fine, and but my second child died at birth and I experienced a tremendous struggle to overcome my grief and rebound as a loving mother and wife. The emotions prevented me, it seems, from concentrating on my research and writing. And the months passed with no progress. As I recall the
chain of events, I contacted my advisor back and SDSU but she did not encourage me with ongoing support or suggest how she could help me work things out. So I put it all away and restabilized my life.

Karon was compelled to complete her degree, and after getting herself emotionally back on track, plans were put back into motion:

There was a period of time where I did substitute teaching and then I was hired by the Department of Education at Southwest in Marshall with the intention to get back into seeking my degree. I found a buddy and we were all set to begin the drive to Mankato and we even registered to do so. However, the good intentions were once again episodic with another change to her husband’s employment:

That summer my husband lost his job as they had overbuilt and needed to cut back. Although I still had a job, there was nothing for him. So we moved to Pierre in August of 1974. There were no jobs at the high school so we talked about having another child and during that time, but I was not fully employed for two years and did contract work.

*With her degree on hold and a new location, Karon unknowingly enters the most demanding and rewarding phase of her career, leading her to the pinnacle of educational leadership in South Dakota.*

**Collecting the Thoughts on the Careers**

*It is effortless to chronicle employment history along these women’s path, but significantly difficult to judge the impact of their journeys as they touched the lives of others along the way. This poses the questions of; “When did these women in actuality*
develop into a true leader” or “What was the indicator along the way that suddenly set them apart from the rest?” The next part of their pilgrimages, interwoven with the career stories previously described, help to give a complete picture of each woman.

**The Heart of the Labyrinth – Leadership Unearthing**

The Labyrinth represents a journey to one’s own center and back again out into the world. Life is a journey. And it is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding one’s vision of what is possible, stretching the soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to one’s intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way. As these women crossed the threshold to the center of their own personal labyrinths, a decisive turn lead them back once again out of the labyrinth. And now for the rest of the story…

**Reflections on Glenna’s Expedition**

Glenna’s teaching career only told a fraction of the entire account of who she really was. Her entire life was deeply immersed in community service. The gesture to the larger community was modeled to her as a young child. “My parents were active in the community and demonstrated its importance. A friend once stated, “Work in your community as that is your rent for being here on earth”. So I did all I could to put back into the community and I was supported by my husband and my children.”

Throughout the years, Glenna was involved in dozens of fundraisers for the Aberdeen area, raising millions of dollars in her lifetime. Glenna was proud of her time and effort to support the community and shared, “My husband and I just raised 12.7 million dollars in the community to build a new health and fitness center.”
Glenna saw community participation as an integral part of who she was throughout her life but just as importantly, it became a support system for her. Besides wanting to be the best teacher possible, I always wanted to be a positive influence in the community. I have always been involved in numerous activities in the community as I felt people need to see educators out in the community. And because I always worked in the community, the community was a support system.

Glenna expressed with chuckle, “I have supported Community Theater and concerts so that when I become elderly my PEO (sorority) sisters will pick me up and take me!” Community involvement served Glenna’s need for involvement beyond the classroom. “I needed new challenges but still pushed myself outside of the norm with co-workers and community activities.”

Actively part of the community, she and her husband set priorities at the start of their marriage in respect to their family. “My husband and I were Jaycee and Jaycettes presidents at the same time and we decided when our first child was born one of us would always be home with our children in the evenings.”

Recognition for Glenna’s commitment to teaching and community came about in 1994 when she was selected South Dakota’s Teacher of the Year. She was recognized for her passion for students in the Alternative Center:

I found a quote I had written in my National Teacher of the Year application, “to my father my life, to my teacher I owe the good life”. This seems especially true with at risk students. I believed in mutual respect
with kids and staff. It does not work without it. I learned to listen and to be sensitive.

Glenna smiled as she related, “I was once called the “military lady” by a mother. This was probably because I cared so deeply about the students!”

In 1998 Glenna was appointed to the South Dakota Board of Education by Governor William Janklow. She continued to serve through 2009 and held the office of President for three and a half years. As a result of her exposure, Glenna was asked to serve on numerous educational task forces, teacher award committees, summer studies, as well as representing the state nationally on educational committees. Glenna’s resume boasted 12 different professional organizations in which she held memberships. She also listed over 20 community activities in which she participated and volunteered in a variety of capacities. Due to her involvement and visibility at both the local and state level, Glenna was called upon in different capacities which was solidified as she stated, “It is not difficult to stay involved in education or in the community. In the last month I have had three requests to become a member of a board of directors for different organizations on the state level.”

Additionally, Glenna had been approached several times to run for the legislature. “I was again asked to run for the legislature this year and again I turned it down. I’m afraid the legislative process would absolutely drive me insane,” she stated emphatically. “It moves too slowly for me and has not influenced me either way.”

Although semi-retired after over 37 years in education, she never quit contributing to education. As the chief examiner for the General Equivalency Degree (GED) testing in Aberdeen, something Glenna takes very seriously. In a conversation
with her in the middle of the winter, she was headed to one of the reservation test centers to administer the GED test. This required her to travel almost 300 miles on ice and snow. When asked why she was out on the unsafe highways that day and why she continued to take on this responsibility, she simply responded, “Because I don’t know who else would do it and it is so satisfying to see these people achieve this goal in their lives.”

Throughout her career, Glenna was repeatedly recognized for her contributions to education and community. A resume full of awards and recognition articulates a woman with a passion for service to her community and state. In a reflective moment, Glenna stated, “I feel I have accomplished more than I ever dreamed of. I have a shelf full of plaques. I am happy and content with my life.”

It was the stories behind the plaques and recognition that reflected Glenna’s character in a more profound sense. A close friend shared a memory of the passion Glenna had for the students she had worked with:

At a time when many educators would find themselves concerned about going to a student’s home, I think this story illustrates Glenna Fouberg’s tenacity and courage in doing what is best for the children with whom she worked. Glenna shares the story about the student she was working with at the Alternative High School who was consistently late. When he didn’t arrive one day, she went to his home to get him and bring him to school. Expecting a young man who was probably sleeping in and skipping school, she found the opposite. This young man worked nights and his one sweatshirt was often too soiled to wear to school the next day. He was late
for school because he was trying to wash this sole shirt before trying to get to school and then later to work.

I don’t remember exactly how she assisted him to solve this problem, but the important thing about this story for me was her ability to realize and help others to see that at times the young people with whom she worked had huge obstacles to just getting to school most days. While many might think they were choosing to miss, the fact of it for many students is that the realities of their own lives had put them into adult roles far before they should have to take on that level of personal responsibility. Understanding those challenges is one of the things that made Glenna a perfect advocate for these students. (2008)

Another incident involved a young lady who had written the Department of Education and state board members regarding her plight of being unable to finish her college education due to fiscal constraints. She was a single mother with three children and struggling to make ends meet. The department responded to her without a lot of promising suggestions. However, unbeknownst to everyone else, Glenna took it on herself to meet the young woman and worked with her to find financial support. A heart for those less fortunate but more important, action behind the heart and passion radiated from this amazing woman.

Reflections on Jan’s Journey

Jan’s leadership qualities emerged as a young woman and were obvious throughout her career. Leadership was but one component of this woman’s life. It was
evident that the thread of caring deeply about others to include students, teachers, and those less fortunate was intertwined throughout everything she did.

In Jan’s beginning years as a teacher, there were no organized sports for girls. Jan took the issue head on and laughed as she explained, “A small group of us met secretly to get things organized for girls’ sports in junior high. I worked with another coach to learn how to coach and we competed within district. My relationships with those students have stayed strong.”

Jan was not content to just teach, but wanted to give kids more. “I also love the outdoors and wanted kids to have the same passion as I did, so I started an outdoor life class that included hunting and fishing and I took 120 -150 kids hunting and fishing.”

It was during this time that Jan found her fervor was for students with special needs. “I ended up teaching those (special needs) kids and developed a passion for those kids. I became an advocate for those types of kids.”

About five years into her career, Jan helped to organize the first teacher’s organization due to what she viewed as inequities for teachers. “There was no educational organization, so I helped to organize the Sioux Falls Classroom Teachers. It was the beginning of my involvement in that movement. I was very active in the local association.” Jan went on to explain with exasperation, “I was often told I may lose my job if I continued to keep doing these type of activities, but I obviously never did!”

It was during the beginning of the 70’s that Jan became president of the local teacher’s association as well as actively involved in the state level Parent Teacher Association (PTA). This was also when she got her first taste of the political process:
I started lobbying for education in the late 70’s for PTA (Parent Teacher Association) and SDEA (South Dakota Education Association). There was very few teachers in legislature at that time and no one really understood education at that time. So I campaigned and got the Sioux Falls association to establish the first pay deduct for a PAC (political action committee).

An unplanned juncture in Jan’s journey led her to run for the legislature, where she served for 14 years. “The president of the SDEA encouraged me to run for office. It was not my goal. My goal was to elect other people.”

Jan was elected to the South Dakota legislature in 1983 and reminisced about the dynamics of the legislature during her first term saying,

We were in double digits for women in the legislature at that time and what I think was the height of things politically. The number of women in the House was better than Senate. There were a number of moderates at that time and a wealth of experience in the legislature who had a lot to offer. I served the first two years on Education, Health and Welfare committees.

Jan’s leadership qualities surfaced quickly and in her next term Jan was placed in a position no other woman had previously held. “I was placed on appropriations in the next term and the following term I became chairman of the House Appropriations Committee for the next 10 years.”

Musing over her pathway from the beginning to later junctures in the legislature, she reflected it was not without challenges. “I sat beside a retired highway patrolman my
first term who was supposed to monitor my activities. The leadership was not sure of my party affiliation and thought I was too liberal!” After smiling mischievously she added, “We later became close friends over time and he actually told me he was assigned to watch me!”

She credited the House majority leader as helping her in her first years as a new legislator, stating, “Joe Barnett, House majority leader, had a tremendous influence on new legislators. He would tell them what they did right and wrong on floor. He helped to develop leaders and he helped me!”

After her appointment to the appropriations committee, she again discovered there was apprehension from other legislators regarding her ability to direct this committee; a concern she attributed to her gender. “Being on appropriations and especially being chairman did not set well with all “the boys”. Initially the “boys” tried to defeat all they could which had my name while I was on appropriations. They did not think I was capable at first.” Jan refused to let this attitude dissuade her and instead, she proactively moved forward:

However, I garnered respect from leadership by building coalitions to get legislation through. I watched people and learned the process before doing anything. My biggest bill was an appropriation for Southeast Technical Institute. The lobbyists were all working with me and it was the turning point for me. I left the legislature in 1996 due to family commitments and removed myself from the ballot.

During this same time frame, from 1988 to 1997, Jan was a principal at the largest high school, in the largest district in South Dakota, Sioux Falls. Jan continued to support
and be an advocate for teachers. “I was still in the legislature at that time. I did a lot of mentoring at that time in grooming other teachers. I was highly involved in school board elections and have stayed involved.”

Jan’s retirement as an administrator in Sioux Falls did not stop her from putting her talents to good use. She began working with programs to assist juveniles who completed the Department of Corrections programs but could not return to their homes:

I worked for (Governor) Janklow in the Department of Corrections and I set up the Watertown Home for Girls and West Farm program. I took over the education program during the Plankinton ordeal. I finally retired from the Sioux Falls school district and retired from the state when the Watertown Home School for Girls closed. However, I was then asked to take over as interim director in Southeast Technical Institute in 2001 for a year.

Jan’s work behind the scenes continued well after her official retirement from education and the legislature. Jan’s continued passion was for those that were less fortunate, whether due to socio-economic or poor choices, resulted in an appointment with South Dakota Corrections. She served on the Governor’s Corrections Workgroup in 2003-04, a program that was highly involved in work release programs for inmates. After the 18 month task force study, Jan was quoted saying, “…the main focus of rehabilitation efforts must be placed on those most likely to succeed. Others merely drain resources. There are some you're not going to change no matter what” (Press & Dakotan, 2004).
Jan was appointed by Governor Michael Rounds to the South Dakota Board of Education in 2004. She maintained a strong interest in the Technical Institutes, governed by the K12 system, and was consistently up-to-date on pending issues.

Jan used her influence behind the scenes on a number of political issues, to include school, city, and state elections as well as women’s rights. She actively worked with the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families beginning in 2005. In the 2006 legislative session, a law was put into effect that banned all abortions. A grassroots campaign was launched to refer the state’s abortion ban to the November ballot. Jan was quoted saying,

Our state government's priorities are wrong. This legislation will jeopardize women whose health is put at risk by continuing a pregnancy and force women who are victims of rape and incest to have no options. As a state, our top priority should be to reduce unintended pregnancies by promoting education and ensuring access to safe birth control. This referral will give every South Dakotan the chance to protect their families and vote their values (South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families, 2006).

The ban was overturned by a 55% margin; however the issue resurfaced in the 2008 legislative session. Jan once again rallied the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families by sending letters to all legislators asking them to focus on helping to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Her continued determination and passion to support the rights of women once again found her to be in the center of a number of discussions at both the state and national levels. She became the face and voice across the state on the matter,
and was quoted repeatedly statewide as well as nationally on the controversial issue. Jan told the Public News Service,

We know from our canvassing and recent polling information that the people of South Dakota are not interested in fighting that battle again. They want legislators to work on issues that are pertinent to all of South Dakota, like health care education and economic development” (Law & Clay, 2008).

Behind the façade of brash determination, a different woman emerged. A long time friend and supporter of Jan’s, shared intimate knowledge of her compassionate heart and unselfish nature:

There are many sides to Jan Nicolay that most people are not familiar with. She has the tremendous ability she has to be a caregiver for people in need. She served as my caregiver when I was diagnosed with Level IV liver and colon cancer. She was with me through all the chemo treatment, doctor's appointments and surgeries and never gave up. She also has served as a caregiver and source of strength for many people in her own family. Jan has one of the most caring personalities for people undergoing serious challenges. At times I have said she is more familiar with hospitals than the people who work there. Her source of strength and “never give up” attitude are amazing qualities she shares with people she cares about or is a friend to. She listens to them and is never judgmental. She is the ultimate coach and cheerleader.
Jan also has devoted hundreds of hours to the CASA program to help young people. I truly believe helping people is her calling and she never fails to give her best. She listens carefully to what people are saying and what they need to help them and then goes into action to resolve the situation. She has also served as a mentor to many people in helping them achieve their goals. Jan is one of those people who gives of herself and never expects anything in return. She is truly a gift to those in need.

(Friend and supporter, 2008)

Reflections on Karon’s Corridor

Karon’s career path did not initially appear to be one that would lead to her becoming the Secretary of Education for South Dakota. The distinguishing characteristic of Karon’s movement towards leadership was her willingness to step up to the plate for new challenges and opportunities. Karon talked non-stop about her beginning job roles with the South Dakota Department of Education:

I contracted with the Department of Education on a program called, “Right to Read”, and I got to know individuals at the department and did work part-time in Veterans Education. My part time work eventually moved into a full time job within the department in 1977-78. Early on I was willing to step up to plate to do whatever was needed. I took on leadership roles in special education and other areas and picked up odds and ends. Through those events I brushed elbows with the emerging computer technology which led to connections with Jim Parry. The Department of Education’s first touches with technology were trainings with special
education in supporting technology for adaptability. I distinctly remember the first time I saw someone walk through a spreadsheet. It was an “ah-ha” moment for me. One of my opportunities sent me to the Utah State University for some training. George Levin kept sending Jim and me for technology training. I taught “Basic” workshops at night and in the summer.

Karon’s eyes were wide open along her pathway through her labyrinth, and she did not let an opportunity pass her by, explaining.

There were always opportunities along the way and I just kept jumping at them. Jim Hanson was the Secretary of Education at the time and Hank Kosters was the State Superintendent. I always supported whoever needed whatever. I jumped out of the Special Education office into the Office of Technology in the 1980’s.

It was at this point that an opportunity presented itself for Karon’s to get her advanced degree. Had this prospect evolved, it could have unknowingly changed the entire course of Karon’s path:

Jim Parry and I were offered slots in doctoral programs at Utah State University. Bottom line was I could not put it together as a family. It was absolutely the worst place for my husband to try to find a job without being Mormon. I had three kids that had to go to school and I was concerned about public school. I finally had to say to myself “stop the madness” and decided there would be another time and place to get this degree, so, I stayed at the department.
It was the decision to stay, however, that eventually led to her position as the Secretary of Education. “I honestly don’t know if there was ever another female Secretary of Education. But I do know that in South Dakota, the “Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education” was an elective position until 1972.”

As Karon reflected over her spiral to the Secretary of Education’s office, she indicated there were numerous persons along that way that were integral to her success:

Initially I got to do some special things when George S. Mickelson was elected Governor in 1986 and re-elected in 1990. He appointed Dr. John Bonaiuto Secretary of Education and I was appointed as deputy. We had been friends in college and also as young married couples in Brookings. To put it bluntly, I was a known quantity to George Mickelson. I was asked to be involved in extra activities and to travel with him and his staff; these experiences quickly helped me to understand the big system. An example was attending the annual National Governor’s Association meeting and then interacting periodically with NGA staff. Those experiences made a huge difference in my understanding of the big system.

It was at this point in her life, that Karon’s relationship with the current Governor helped her gain invaluable knowledge of school funding:

These were important years as George had campaigned on the premise that if wages in SD were 35th in nation, he would work to raise South Dakota teacher salaries to 35th in the nation. He was elected in 1986, got to Pierre and then realized it would take more money to accomplish this
goal than he had ever imagined. He initiated an additional sales tax increase and dispatched a group of his staff to hold open meetings around the state to explain the sales tax increases. I traveled with Lieutenant Governor Walt Miller around West River, giving the speech and showing slides on what a difference this would make. Later during George’s second term in 1990-1994, he was laying the ground for change in state aid formula. Walt ran a task force to study the state aid formula and come up with solutions (a common consensus-building strategy for Governors) along with consultant out of Denver. After Governor Mickelson was killed in the plane crash, Walt became Governor to finish out the second term.

The loss of her friend and the change in Governor had an unexpected effect on her career as deputy, but did not stop her work:

A primary election was held in June 1994 as a second Republican and previous Governor, Bill Janklow, also wanted the job. Walt lost; and when Bill Janklow became the Republican candidate and was elected Governor in the November 1994 general election. He knew the state aid formula needed to be changed; staff in the Department of Education was well-poised for the task because several of us had worked closely with the Denver consultant and Walt Miller’s task force the previous year.

Due to changes in direction with the new Governor, Karon’s position also changed with every turn throughout her labyrinth as she was at the whim of new leadership:
However, the Secretary of Education, John Bonaiuto, was not re-appointed to the position by Governor Janklow. I became “acting” secretary for a period of time in late 1994-1995. I honestly feel that perhaps Janklow wanted Jan Nicolay to be his Secretary of Education, but for whatever reason, she did not agree to take the position. This is supposition on my part, but I think I am probably right. I served as “acting secretary” for several months and was then appointed Secretary of Education in 1995.

Governor Janklow empowered Karon to set the direction for a major change to the state aid formula during her first year as Secretary of Education. This change dramatically impacted the way schools in South Dakota were funded:

During the 1995 Legislative Session, Janklow’s first during this term as Governor (he had also been Governor 1979-1987) we worked furiously to devise changes to the state aid formula and to help legislators understand the complicated method by which money was distributed to public schools in South Dakota. I was able to provide leadership within the department for this activity; and an attorney from Sioux Falls, David Knutson, was temporarily in Pierre during the 1995 Legislative Session as “special staff” for Governor Janklow. He provided the “arm twisting” among the legislators for the legislation which changed the state aid formula.

The focus in the South Dakota Department of Education moved towards technology, resulting in another change in Karon’s jub as she rounded the next corner of her trek:
Another goal Governor Janklow established was advancing the use of technology in public schools through an initiative we called “Wiring the Schools” (1995-1999). We were able to contract with Ray Christensen, a long-time Sioux Falls teacher and former SDEA president, to head up the project for us. Governor Janklow directed that prison inmates would be trained and supervised as they installed updated wiring and telecommunications cable in public schools throughout the state. The “Wiring the Schools” project gained statewide and national attention; Ray was much in demand as a speaker to explain the project to school boards, community groups, and eventually curious state leaders from other states.

Karon showed her dignity and professionalism when she was asked to resume the position of Deputy Secretary:

When Governor Janklow was re-elected to his fourth term as Governor in 1998, he appointed Ray Christensen as Secretary of Education and once again I became the deputy secretary. I honestly was “okay” with the change in position. It was actually somewhat of a relief when I went to deputy again. I honestly wanted to keep the work going and was not concerned about my own position as much as I was in accomplishing the goals. Janklow was not the same leadership style as I was; I found much of the whole pomp and circumstance of the position and the “Governor’s cabinet” wearing and somewhat meaningless. I worked well with Ray during his time as the director of “Wiring the Schools” and also his tenure
on the state board of education; it was not hard for either of us to become “partners” in the Secretary’s office.

This was not the last time that Karon’s job description within the department changed. A new Governor and new leadership dictated her next role within the department:

When Governor Janklow completed his fourth term in 2003, Ray left the position, knowing that the appointed positions would likely turn over when a new Governor took office. Governor Michael Rounds was inaugurated in January, 2004, and he asked me to serve once again as acting Secretary of Education. When Dr. Rick Melmer was appointed Secretary of Education, I became his deputy secretary with the understanding that I would be retiring from public service in May. I knew that if I got too far into the four-year term of Governor Rounds, it would be expected that I finish it out, pushing my retirement back to 2008, and I did not want to continue in the role for that length of time. So I was able to retire as planned at age 62 in May, 2004.

Karon’s talents were not limited to South Dakota. She served in a number of leadership roles across the state of South Dakota as well as nationally. She was a member of the Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in her role as the Secretary and Deputy of Education for the Department of Education. She served on the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) Board of Directors. This board played important roles in applied research and policy for the central region (McRel, 2003). She was a member of the Leading Organization for Technology Integration (LOFTI) which had
partners from higher education, K12 school districts, Department of Education, and cooperatives across the state.

A career of remarkable accomplishments resulted in a spiral to the top, serving as a cabinet member to the Governor as Secretary of Education in South Dakota. However; all of the wisdom from years of experiences could not prepare Karon for her next challenge following retirement. In the midst of anticipation of spending the next phase of her life traveling with her husband and being with children and grandchildren, Karon's husband was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia. Caring for an aging mother and the challenges of her husband's disease changed Karon's course dramatically; however, once again she approached it in her dignified manner, stating,

My personal goal at this point is to get my husband through his health issues with dignity. It is causing me to learn a lot about neurology and the whole spectrum of elder law. I have read the best thing to do is compile a team of people because you need a diverse range of knowledge to draw upon.

_Taking from the Labyrinth: A Reflection of the Crossing_

_Walking a labyrinth can be symbolic of life’s path. It is not obvious to determine where one is going, but the individual must trust the twists and turns of the path. Upon entering, the labyrinth may at first appear somewhat confusing, difficult to determine what the next bend will bring. However, provided the adventurer is not overcome at the center, it leads, despite twists and turns, back to the beginning. Thus, this discussion will reflect on the entire journey of these women from start to end (Artress, 1995)._
A reflection of the career beginnings of these women would have been inconsequential for any female growing up in the era of the early 1960’s in South Dakota. Commonalities of teaching, English majors, marriage and families, the baby boomer time period, were components of their lives that could be neatly aligned and checked off the list. The intriguing query, however, related to the specific factors which may have influenced them into becoming recognizable leaders and “known quantities” in South Dakota? While a number of similarities were strikingly evident, individual personalities and styles of leadership were very distinct to each woman.

All three women were asked to reflect on what had shaped their careers and what events influenced them to take on the leadership roles. Glenna had been the most focused in her career choice as a teacher. Neither Jan nor Karon intended to teach, but instead, found it to be the logical thing to do. As these females’ careers moved forward, they were unable to point to a specific event that shaped their career paths. “Life happened and took me on a path. Respect has taken care of everything. I always subscribed to the golden rule.” Glenna reflected, “There was always an opportunity that came along when I needed it and I took advantage of it.”

Similarly, Karon acknowledged, “Nothing really shaped my career. There were no specific strategies along the path. It was simply in my nature to recognize opportunity and act on it.” Karon did not vacillate to point out her aptitude to seize the moment. “I always watched for opportunities and I was there to step up to plate and tackled things that others would not.”

Jan’s entry into the labyrinth was uncertain without a concrete career plan as well. “I had no particular plan. I started out trying to help people in my social work...
background. I never went to school thinking I was going to be a teacher but it happened.”

She further clarified, “I did not set out to be first women administrator in Sioux Falls and it was not premeditated. It was the same with legislature. I was encouraged along the way to do different things I did not set out to be the chair of appropriations but had the natural talent.” Jan’s attributed her confidence to her family ties. “I really think that strong family background gives a certain sense of confidence.”

A fearless nature was common in these women along with their sense of confidence. When Glenna was asked about success or failures along the way, she was quick to answer assuredly, “I cannot remember failures that impacted anything or kept me from moving on. I never dwelt on them as I picked up and went on. At least nothing that stopped me from moving forward anyway.” In her cavalier manner she also reflected, “However, I always found it easier to get forgiveness than to get permission. I always let others carry my idea and make them think it was their idea.”

The air of confidence was reiterated by Karon: “In high school and college I was always in a position of leadership and was naturally elected. I was the oldest and early on I was always “in charge”. I really think that birth order made a difference,” Karon stated explicitly. “It is part of my whole personality of not being afraid … and I guess you could say, being able to see big picture.” Her fearlessness and ability to see the big picture were advantageous as she took on new tasks. “I was willing to seek new avenues to accomplish things.”

The willingness to search for out new ways of accomplishing things was recognized when honored with the HERO award in 2004. Dr. Rick Melmer, Secretary of Education, commented on Karon’s contributions by stating,
During her long and distinguished service, Karon Schaack has been a model of lifelong learning, continuously acquiring new knowledge and skills to apply and share with her colleagues ... powerful legacy for the department and for the State. Schaack was instrumental in developing and launching TIE (Technology and Innovations in Education) in 1986, to help schools successfully integrate computers into their curriculum. TIE leaders want to recognize and honor Karon for her commitment to education in South Dakota and to thank her for her special attention to the goals and work of TIE. (TIE Newsletter, 2004).

Glenna described herself repeatedly throughout the interview as someone always ‘in charge’. “My personality was always ‘take charge’. My whole family was that way and my own children are and everyone allowed me to be in charge. I was always in a position of leadership in all organizations I belonged to and still am,” she stated unwaveringly.

The organizer, the social planner, as well as a sense of humor help to complete Glenna’s list of personality traits. “I am outgoing, have a sense of humor, the ability to listen to others, collaborative, and I have mutual respect for others.” Glenna credited her father for modeling both leadership and humor. “My father was a leader as well. He had a sense of humor that I think I picked up. There is a quote that I adopted for myself; ‘Learn to laugh at yourself and you are amused for life’. I guess I am always amused!”

Jan identified that her overriding personality traits were her directness and candor. She described that she was often criticized for her straightforward manner
My directness and candor is often a criticism and sometimes it is also seen as strength. I spend enormous amount of time doing research before making decisions. I have been criticized by teachers and those in the profession due to my directness. I am candid and not afraid to tell people my position.

Jan displayed genuine compassion for people and those who were unable to advocate for themselves. “People that worked with me (kids and families) knew I cared. I listened and made a decision. I made a decision and based it on input. I never asked anyone to do anything that I would not do myself. And, I was and am a hard worker.” In almost the same breath, Jan acknowledged that her affinity for hard work was also her downfall. “I am often overextended and take on too much. I still do this!”

Hard work was a core trait for all three women. Glenna’s involvement in the community and across the state continued well after her retirement. Karon found working hard in the department her stepping stone to success. “No one wanted to work too hard. If something new came along, no one around was too eager to do things with it. So I stepped up and was recognized for it.” She summed it up well by stating, “I just think as females we know how to work hard and that is recognized.”

The challenges associated along the pathway to leadership as a female were evident throughout the dialogues. Glenna perhaps felt the least impacted by her gender stating, “I never felt that being female held me back…I have a take charge personality and often overdid it. This does not mean I am not aware of the inequities some women deal with, however.” A comment was made to her at the point she was going to enter college that perhaps spoke more to the social climate of the 1960’s than specifically
toward Glenna. She shared with sarcasm in her voice, “I was told by a gentleman that questioned my going on to college, that all I was going to do was change diapers someday.”

Karon experienced gender inequality firsthand while still in high school. “I was a creature of age in which I grew up and what I mean by that began in high school I registered for physics after chemistry and biology, and was then told by the school counselor that girls didn’t take physics. Nor did they take a fourth year of math. She laughed wryly before she continued,

When I went to the university I was told I did not have to take math so I took geology for whatever reason. I got the word on higher science and math and always have regretted not taking additional science and math. I also had a high school friend who became an engineer. Initially she was a freshman at SDSU and tried to enroll in engineering and was unable to do so because of gender. Ultimately she transferred to Macalaster College in Minnesota, was able to earn an engineering degree with honors, and had a very successful career with 3-M.

Karon was candid in her struggles in trying to achieve the balance of a working mom and career woman in the early 60’s:

I really feel there was another significant thread woven in my life. The *Feminine Mystique* (Betty Friedan, author) was published the year I graduated from high school; it sparked a national debate about women's roles and in time was recognized as one of the central works of the modern women's movement. I feel that, from high school graduation on, I was
caught between the new and old ways of thinking. In the early years of my marriage, and when I was a mom with two children, all my peers were stay at home women. I truly wanted to be accepted and liked but I knew that my peers probably talked about me in unkind ways for not being the stay at home mom.

Male dominance and social structures were evident throughout different phases of these women’s careers. It was at the very beginnings of her career that Karon experienced exclusion due to her gender:

Early on in my career, leadership in education was all male and I think societal horses were geared to keep it that way. It was hard to get a voice and hard to have one that had credibility. My curriculum committee work was a good example. In the Brookings system, they were all coaches. It was such a strong network and I was not part of it due to being female and not being an athlete. It was truly a closed cast system. It made progression harder but I sometimes think that as a result I had to work harder and ended up with more skills which may not be all bad. This was definitely true early on in the Department of Education. But I think, well, it was maybe more of a general feeling that is hard to put a finger on.

Karon observed the male dominance in the department but instead of allowing it to impact her; she grabbed each opportunity:

Upon entry into the Department of Education, it was obvious that leadership was held primarily by males. It was typical that in, to be honest, that all leadership roles were male and a lot were small school
superintendents who had got in a jam at some point and it was a good ole’ boys club. I still think it is easier for males as there is a network there. We – meaning females - are more “in” but still easier for men.

Jan not only felt the pangs of gender discrimination, but experienced it firsthand. As a girl in her teens, she is remindful of the attitude towards girls during that time period:

I do have to tell you my ovary story just to emphasize the point. We had a trampoline that was going to be taken away as we were told it would injure our ovaries if we jumped like that – remember, there were no after school sports for girls. I did, however, play softball in Nebraska in a community league and in Watertown.

She chuckled as she related, “I went out for football in junior high and believe it or not, the males were not as excited as other people were!” Jan was responsible for starting the first teachers’ organization in Sioux Falls, something she felt compelled to do as a result of the biases she observed for females:

There were inequities and as an example, women were paid $200 less than males. We did not have health benefits as a single female and we were told what to wear to work. Those who got pregnant had to quit which I felt was extremely discriminating. I remember how my aunt instilled in me the need to be treated equally.

Her influence from the strong women in her life as well as support from her family continued to impact her. “I often felt discriminated against as a female and related it back to my aunt and my parents.”
Jan applied for a job as an assistant principal in Sioux Falls and was initially turned down due to her gender. Additionally, she experienced discrimination in her entry into the legislature. She found her seatmate to be assigned to watch her activities:

I had to sell the fact that a female could do the job as an administrator. I did not want to do anything to set people back. They did not trust me as the chairman of the appropriations and I worked really hard to make sure I understood the issue so that I could give people accurate information.

She continued with disdain, “Remember, this was a time when the boys all went to the Elks and women were not allowed.”

As she reflected on her life, Jan stated, “I wanted to be the best example for women professionally. I really feel that SDEA did a lot for women in leadership roles – it was a concentrated program for women.”

Jan also felt that she was fortunate to have a male superintendent come into the Sioux Falls school district that believed in female leadership. “One thing that helped me was that Dr. Jack Keegan (Sioux Falls superintendent) believed in women in leadership. It was challenging to get positions prior to his coming.”

Her intense fervor for the rights of women and being a good example for women were exemplified as she shared with commitment,

I took on ballot issue and feel so strongly about women and family and individual rights to make personal decisions. I guess you could say I am passionate about the issue. It is interesting because what has been sad is the people that have come to me and said how glad they were that I took on the issue. It is really sad when a group of people can be pushed in a
corner and they don’t feel they can take on the issue themselves. As I stated before, I am not afraid to tell people what my position is on different topics.

The ability to stand up when confronted with controversy and lead was common with all three women. When questioned if their ability to lead shaped their personality or if their personality had shaped their ability to lead; all were in agreement; personality had shaped their ability to lead.

Glenna repeated her characteristic take charge personality trait stating, “Personality has shaped me to take the lead. I always take charge.”

Jan stated that her ability to lead was closely correlated to her belief system. “It is all related to my value system. What I believe in makes me do what I do.”

Likewise, Karon shared, “My personality shaped how I lead. I believe I am a natural leader due to my experiences in life. I was always fair and had maintained high ethical standards. I tried to keep the best interest of teachers and kids at heart.”

As natural leaders, one would assume collaboration to be intuitive throughout their careers. But interestingly, they saw themselves struggling with collaboration at different junctures. A maverick type of attitude existed with these independent women; an attitude of being able to get the job done on their own. Although Jan found it necessary to build coalitions to get legislation through, she admitted that later in life she lost some of her collaborative spirit. “Good or bad, I became less collaborative as it slowed down the process. It was bad in the sense that people didn’t see me talking to the group.”
Glenna’s aggressive personality also struggled with individuals she perceived as slowing down processes:

I am intolerant of those that don’t move as quickly or think as quickly as I do. A principal once told me that I was intolerant of others however, that was quite early in my career and I think that was constructive criticism and really helped me to become a better educator and person. I have always been in charge and always a leader and perhaps have become more aggressive in life. Grandchildren have taught me patience though.”

While always being in charge was a part of Glenna’s nature, she viewed herself as very collaborative:

I am very collaborative. I never was a boss, I worked with others. I have found that listening to others gives them respect for you as well. I am able to see each person as a person, unique to themselves. I’d say a strategy that helped me achieve my objectives was being willing to work with others, whether it is on the job or in the community.

Karon was reflective about her collaboration skills as she found herself more comfortable with the concept of “shared leadership”:

I saw myself become more comfortable with shared leadership over time. This included networking and taking in lots of points of view and weighing decisions and that was always what I wanted to do and able to do. I also took accountability seriously and holding others accountable became a lot more important as time went on. I also grew a great deal in tolerance of differences and styles and backgrounds over time.
Karon’s humble approach to leadership was described by Dr. Rick Melmer, Secretary of Education, as a *servant leader*:

Karon is a person of integrity and humility. She is a “servant leader” who maintains her balance amidst the realities of political forces. She does not clamor for the limelight, but is content to work selflessly behind the scenes to ensure that programs are sound and that needs of learners are met. (TIE Newsletter, 2004)

Karon’s professionalism did not go unnoticed by those who worked with her in the Department of Education. A long time friend and co-worker, shared:

The one thing that always really impressed me with Karon was her ability to accept her role in the department, whatever it was at the time. With the change in administration, Karon was always the "constant" for the Department of Education. She gracefully accepted changes from acting department secretary, to department secretary, to deputy secretary, to acting secretary, and back to deputy secretary. All of these changes began in 1995 until her retirement. It was very interesting to see her move from each role and accept her new responsibilities each time a change was made. Karon was a real class act in accepting the changes and always a great supporter of the newly appointed department secretary. (Co-worker, 2008)

It would be logical to assume that these women had strong support systems serving as their walls as they traversed along the labyrinth. None of them could point to one specific person that mentored them but instead, individuals along the journey who
impacted them in one way or another. The common thread among all three was the support of family. Glenna pointed to her immediate and extended family as strong support systems:

My entire family, both my spouse and children, were very supportive. My siblings have also been very supportive. I had no negative forces from family at all. Any negative forces were outside the family and they were easy to ignore. This helped me to move forward successfully. I was always told that I did not have to work from my husband but I did anyway.

Additionally, various individuals helped to complete her support system including those she worked with. “Older women were very supportive of me as well as my staff at the alternative center. I always knew that parents would have supported anything I did.”

Jan credited key individuals in her family that supported and encouraged her throughout her career:

My husband was extremely supportive as well as my parents. Additionally my siblings were always there for me. My mother encouraged the girls to go to school to take care of themselves. Dad was always treasurer for my legislative races. And my aunt was my inspiration. I remember how my aunt instilled in me the need to be treated equally. My aunt was my role model and was in World War II. She took chances and did things and she emphasized that women had qualities and skills and opportunities.

Jan continued, speaking of her husband’s support, “I married Jerry in 1965 who gave me strong support. He was not co-dependent at all nor needed me to fit a
mold. He encouraged me to do whatever I wanted and to be willing to take a risk.”

Outside of her family, Jan’s support systems were limited. “There were not many people around to support me in my profession; specifically there were no females at that time. Later, my friendship with Dianna Miller encouraged me to take risks and leadership training through NEA.”

Karon described a connection with her advisor from graduate school whom she considered her mentor as a young career woman. The relationship did not provide the support that Karon needed however:

I started on my master’s degree at South Dakota State University which consisted of nights and summers. My advisor became my mentor or as close as I guess I ever had. I greatly admired her and adopted her “life story” as a pattern for my own. Looking back, I recognize now that she was a very traditional woman, which may not have helped me set and achieve career goals in the long run.

Karon lamented the lack of a mentor in her life as she stated, “I really had no specific support systems. I never had a mentor and felt badly that I did not, but did have significant people along the way like colleagues and compatriots that supported me. Governor George Mickelson opened doors for me.”

Karon, like both Jan and Glenna, acknowledged the importance of her family throughout her career:

My family was very supportive - both my husband and children. My immediate family was self reliant. It was necessary for the amount of time
I was gone as you are also well aware. And my siblings were very supportive. I always knew my brother and sisters were always cheering for me and willing to step in.

The question was posed to these women of how the conservative culture of South Dakota influenced their passageways to success. Karon recognized challenges at the start of her career but instead of letting anything hold her back, hard work became one of the keys to her success. “I just think as females we know how to work hard and that is recognized.”

Jan recognized the value of hard work that Karon discussed. “I think it made me work harder to prove myself and I proved myself in one term in the legislature.”

The conservative nature of South Dakota influenced legislators to draft bills and spur conversation on a number of ethical topics. Both Jan and Glenna viewed the involvement of the legislature in morality issues as extremely disturbing. Jan spoke with fervor as she talked. “Morality issues drive me crazy! It is hard to see how few people step up to the plate on issues that are controversial. They don’t want to take the risk. I was a risk taker and did things outside the box. “

Glenna shook her head as she talked about morality issues that pervaded the agendas repeatedly in the South Dakota Legislature. “The conservative morality issues drive me crazy. I think moderately. That is part of the reason I would never run for the legislature!”

These women had different personalities and unexpected twists and turns on their pathways to leadership. However, there were strong correlations as they reflected on their professional goals. Deep compassion for others was common among all three women
along with the desire to excel. The commonalities of their passions towards excellence and compassion for others blur among all three woman.

Karon spoke sincerely, “What really drove me was creating better opportunities for teachers and kids. In the middle of my career especially, I became fascinated with technology and what that could do for the learning experiences for teachers and kids was key.”

Glenna didn’t hesitate to answer when asked of her professional goals, “I wanted to be the best teacher possible, and I always tried to keep up with current trends in education.” She further added while discussing personal goals, “Besides wanting to be the best teacher possible, I always wanted to be a positive influence in the community.”

Jan’s professional goals were focused outward. “I wanted to be the best example for women professionally. I had no desire to get my doctorate as it did not fit and I never wanted to go beyond the school building. I continue to advocate for children and those that can’t make decisions for themselves.”

Serving the needs of family members was extremely important throughout their careers and beyond. Glenna shared, “My personal goal was to be the best mother and spouse possible. And church was important in my life and as was family.”

Karon made sacrifices throughout her career to put her husband and family first but it never affected her professionally, only personally:

In my working years my personal goals were family centered and it was important that my own kids did well in school as I truly recognized that ability for them. I wanted them to develop their own interests and see the world. Somewhere along the line, I decided not to go after the next degree.
I had a talk with Darrell Jensen in the 80-90’s. I guess I am not sure, and this was the last time I discussed this was when the university started to offer online classes. Dean Myers had left the department and discussed this with me. It became obvious that although classes were online, I still needed to be in a certain time and place. I may go to grave regretting the lack of credentials… I sometimes still think “if only”, but it is okay … but I wish…

Karon trailed off without completing the sentence. The obvious regret and frustration still existed.

Who were these women privately and personally? Reserved and dignified, Karon spoke articulately about what she found absorbing and enthralling both personally and professionally:

I am encouraging my kids to develop reflective practice in their chosen fields and to eagerly seek life-long learning. I love to read biography, watch football, travel and want to encourage my own kids and also to look at grandkids and really motivate them to do well. I am trying to plan ahead for them as well and to make a wise use of resources.

Glenna, always on the move and continually planning for the next event, responded with the same enthusiasm that she demonstrates towards life:

I think that I was probably ADD as I was told to always “sit down” or to be quiet. I always have multiple things going on at the same time at all times from projects to books to activities and yes, my knitting. I find reading, knitting, music, quilting, and working with others my passion. I
was never isolated professionally and never tried to lump everyone
together. I always wanted what was best for the kids.

Jan’s direct manner and serious demeanor seemed to not coincide with a
surprising set of interests:

I love hunting, fishing, and I ride a Harley – I actually followed the races
in the early 60’s and traveled the circuit. I love to read a mixture of things,
professional and fiction plus I love country western music. And this will
surprise you, but I am a very good dancer!

Reflecting over their lives, regrets were few among the three women. When asked
what changes they would have made along their career paths, both Jan and Glenna
responded with not any. “I feel I have accomplished more than I ever dreamed of. I have
a shelf full of plaques. I am happy and content with my life.”

“I have no changes and no regrets with my life,” Jan answered without hesitation.
“If I had not opened the alternative school that would have been one regret. No regrets on
not furthering my education. But I knew when it was time to leave the profession.”

Karon could not ignore the one pervasive lament in her life, stating, “Like I said,
and this is a recurring theme, but my credentials. And, when I was the Secretary of
Education, I worried about the state library not having enough of my time.”

Collecting Thoughts on the Crossing

All journeys are ultimately through a labyrinth, though mostly this is metaphoric.
The golden thread is the truth of our spirits. If we follow it with trust, we will emerge; re-
surface from the depths of uncertainty, weakness, and the most difficult challenges
(Palumbo, 2001).
To attempt to sum up the rich stories that led these women to the crossroads in their lives at which this study ended would begin another in-depth study. As I began the interviews with each woman, they expressed in different ways that this was an opportunity to be reflective about their own lives. The stories were inclusive of successes, frustrations, accomplishments but more so, a reflection of three women who have lived life passionately. A reminder to all of us to “live your best life”!
CHAPTER V
DISCOVERING THE THEMES

The purpose of this study was to describe through qualitative inquiry the experiences and events that guided three women to positions of leadership in South Dakota. I used multiple methods for gathering information vis-à-vis these women’s lives. I examined verbal and written records as well as observed these women in multiple settings. I considered the collective thoughts of the participants as well as friends and co-workers that were influenced by them both personally and professionally. A study of the rich data obtained from the interviews, observations, document reviews, and literature concerning women in South Dakota and women in leadership led to the emergence of an overarching foundational theme, common characteristics, and unique characteristics. Throughout, the relationship of the findings to the literature is interwoven throughout.

Exploring the Labyrinth

In describing these women’s journeys, the metaphor of a labyrinth was suggested. These women’s lives included a series of unusual paths. At its most basic level the labyrinth is a metaphor suggesting a journey to the center of one’s deepest self and back out into the world with a broadened understanding of the person one has becomes. Labyrinths and mazes have often been confused. When most people hear of a labyrinth they think of a maze. A labyrinth is not a maze. A maze is like a puzzle to be solved. It has twists, turns, and blind alleys. A labyrinth has only one path. It is unicursal. The way in is the way out. There are no blind alleys. The path leads you on a circuitous path to the center and at that point, a decisive turn brings one out again (Palumbo, 2001).
Diagram 3: The Labyrinth to Leadership

Journey to Successful Leadership

- Confidence
- Courage
- Ambition
- Caring
- High Expectations
- Hard Work
- Family Support system
- Time Period
  - Traditional Values
  - High Expectations
  - Birth Order

Diagram 3: The Labyrinth to Leadership
Foundational Theme

Metaphorically, one might view the center of these women’s labyrinths to encase their leadership achievement. Their journeys had similar junctures along the way that form the common characteristics emerging from these women’s stories. However, it was the distinctiveness of each woman’s trek from the inner circle to the exit that brings the uniqueness of personality and leadership style to complete chronicles of lives well lived.

An important foundational thread that influenced these women collectively was the time period in which they were born and grew up. Born in 1942, traditional families with high expectations, and birth order strongly impacted these women. These foundational factors appeared to have set the basis for the development of each of these women.

The concept for this theme was a comment from Karon, who stated, “I am the oldest of five children and born 1942 and felt that was a significant period during WWII. I think that that period of time shaped me as it probably did others in the 1950’s.” Throughout their stories, each woman talked of the impact of their early lives and family values, which had their roots in the period in which they grew up.

It is possible to envision family members – parents and siblings - standing behind each woman at the entrance of their labyrinths, pushing and encouraging them to strike out on their passages. The labyrinth experience allowed others to observe those journeying, thus family members continued to provide strong support while encircling the labyrinth. As husbands and children joined the life stories of the three women, they united those surrounding the labyrinth, providing additional support while waiting for their wives and mothers to exit.
Research tends to focus on the characteristics of strong women leaders that have “arrived” rather than the foundation and background from which women “originated”. The dynamics of these women’s early lives and strong family foundations will be addressed throughout the findings specific to the study’s research questions. The importance of the time and place in which these women were raised should not be overlooked. It raises the question of whether these women had unique characteristics that lead to successful leadership positions, or whether the common values of the era influenced them.

**Common Characteristics**

**Emergence Through the Women’s Voices**

Data drawn from the three women of the qualitative study showed common characteristics that were reported in two dissimilar aspects; 1) foundational personal characteristics, inspired by traditional families and the time period, and 2) intuitive leadership characteristics, acquired and innate. While the characteristics are intertwined, **hard work, high expectations, and confidence** formed strong foundations as these women journeyed to the center of their labyrinths. Characteristics of **courage, ambition,**
and caring led them out of the labyrinth, retracing their successful career paths.

Foundational Personal Characteristics

Repeatedly throughout their chronicles, **hard work** was intuitive throughout their lives. As discussed previously, an unanticipated influence among these women was the era in which these women were born and raised. While not by design in the selection of the participants for the study, these women were all born in 1942. World War II had a direct impact on both Karon and Jan’s early lives. Karon addressed the issue directly, stating, “I think that that period of time shaped me as it probably did others in the 1950’s.” She talked about it being “a time where there were sacrifices to be made on home front.”

The absence of Jan’s father while away at war was significant in her early years. Raised by her mother and grandmother until the age of three, Jan’s was strongly influenced by their independence. She was also impacted by an aunt that had served in World War II who modeled that women had skills and opportunities.
Born in 1942, these women were referred to as “Cuspers” according to generational studies. While generational issues were not part of the original research discussion, these three women exhibited many of the characteristics found in the generational research. Identified as the Traditionalist/Baby Boomers born between 1940 and 1945, these Cuspers valued a strong work ethic like the Traditionalists (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

The strong work ethic was exhibited early in their lives as each woman pushed to excel in school and took on unwanted tasks throughout their careers that were noticed. There was a strong feeling of pride attached to hard work and one of the factors these women viewed as critical to personal success. In discussing her personal strengths, Jan stated, “I was and am a hard worker.” As she wound her way through her political career she discussed the lack of trust exhibited by other legislators towards her early in her term. “I think it made me work harder to prove myself.”

Karon saw hard work a female characteristic, and one that helped her to navigate through her labyrinth with success. When dealing with the closed caste system in her early years of teaching, Karon related how hard work was actually advantageous in the long run. “It (the male network) made progression harder but I sometimes think that as a result I had to work harder and ended up with more skills which may not be all bad.” She summarized her feelings on her work ethic stating, “I just think as females we know how to work hard and that is recognized.”

Glenna worked hard through her college years, accomplishing an advanced degree at a young age. “I transferred in my sophomore year and finished in the next two years because I was putting myself through college. I had a double major and held down
various jobs so I didn’t participate in activities to any degree.” She jumped immediately into obtaining an advanced degree. “When I was only 25 I already had five years of teaching and master’s degree.” She juggled not only the responsibilities of work and family, but also the community. Hard work set a strong foundation for these women.

Closely intertwined with their hard work ethic, confidence was instinctive throughout their lives. The women in this study could be portrayed as “strong confident women”, and it could be debated if it was the result of biology or social influences. It is difficult to discern if their innate confidence was due to their successes in life or whether acquired confidence set them up for success. They were self-assured and knew they had the perseverance to meet the professional challenges. Their positive self-images enabled them to draw on inner strength to meet challenges and overcome obstacles.

Stories from early childhood substantiated that their families had encouraged them throughout their lives. Additionally, their families believed in their abilities, and always encouraged them to “be all that they could be”. Strong supportive families were the cornerstone for a strong personal identity and the foundation for building character. Jan articulated this best by stating, “I really think that strong family background gives a certain sense of confidence.”

The confidence these women exhibited was evident not only in the interviews, but in the pages of documentation of accomplishments. Glenna shared unabashedly, “I cannot remember failures that impacted anything or kept me from moving on. I never dwelt on them as I picked up and went on. At least nothing that stopped me from moving forward anyway,”
Each woman talked of themselves as being natural leaders without wavering. Jan saw herself as having “natural talent”, while Karon remembered being “naturally elected” for school offices. Glenna stated she was “always a leader”. The personas that evolved from these women were that of confident, tenacious, and high-achieving leaders. They believed in themselves and upheld the attitude of "why can't I".

**High expectations** were mingled throughout their stories as they embarked on the path, continuing throughout the journeys. Each woman was strongly encouraged throughout their childhoods to do their best, a trait they carried throughout their lives. Karon shared her father’s wishes for his children to attend college “and they were not just going to go, but to do well.” She carried these same expectations for her own children stating, “…it was important that my own kids did well in school as I truly recognized that ability for them.” Extending this expectation, she stated she continues to “look at my grandkids and really motivate them to do well.”

Jan’s father had similar expectations as she stated, “Dad was very strict about good grades.” It was her mother who “set a standard for keeping things up.” Because of expectations, Jan said she studied hard as it “was embedded”. A teacher in the 8th grade had similar influence on her as she stated, “Additionally, Mrs. Begge, my 8th grade teacher, influenced me tremendously. She stressed the importance about reading and writing. She pushed me to read beyond the normal.” The high standards modeled to her as a child carried throughout her career. “I wanted to be the best example for women professionally.”

Glenna took “difficult curriculum” and graduated with honors. Music was an important aspect in her life and she played 1st chair oboe and was part of the orchestra.
The early influences to do well carried throughout her life as she shared that professionally, “I wanted to be the best teacher possible.” Just as important to her, she had high expectations as a wife and mother. “My personal goal was to be the best mother and spouse possible.”

**Intuitive Leadership Characteristics**

The characteristics of **hard work, confidence** and **high expectations** were foundational, and they continued to guide these women on their paths through the unexpected twists and turns. The characteristics of **courage, ambition** and **caring** were intuitive as these women progressed along the leadership path.

These **courageous** women did not hesitate to take risks throughout their careers. Jan referred to herself as a risk taker, and in particular when it came to stances she took on issues while serving in the legislature as well as her passion for matters related to women’s rights. “I was a risk taker and did things outside the box.” Strong support and encouragement to take risks from both her husband and a close friend was documented by Jan.

Glenna referred to herself as having more guts than brains adding, stating, “… I pushed myself outside of the norm with co-workers and community activities.”

Karon saw herself able to take on new challenges due to innate ability. “It is part of my whole personality of not being afraid …” and later she added, “I was willing to seek new avenues to accomplish things.”

The trait of courage was discussed in the research of Regan and Brooks (1995). The women they studied were risk takers and set out in non-traditional paths. The intuitive sense of self gave each of the women studied the courage to move on to places
that were compatible with their own beliefs. These three women started on conventional paths, however, unafraid to take the next turn around the corner of the labyrinth when difficulties were eminent.

The Caliper (2005) study found women to have a sense of urgency in getting things done and thus may push back when bound by rules or regulations. They were willing to run the risk of being wrong in the effort of getting something done. This was confirmed when Glenna shared her philosophy stating, “I always found it easier to get forgiveness than to get permission.”

Generational studies show the attribute of courage as common to the “Cuspers” who are often eager to challenge the status quo, a definite Boomer trait (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

Jan challenged the status quo throughout her career well into her semi-retirement. She found the inequity for women in the workforce abominable and thus sought to change the system by organizing the first teacher’s association. Throughout her career, she was not afraid to take on difficult and controversial issues to include advocating for women’s rights.

Closely related to the courageous and risk taking personalities, these women were ambitious. Ambitious is defined in the as “Requiring or showing much effort; challenging and strongly desirous; eager; requiring exceptional effort, ability (American Heritage Dictionary, 2008). Appearing similar to the characteristic of hard work, ambition requires hard work. It is also characteristic of persons desiring success or a goal.

Metaphorically, it is possible to envision these ambitious women turning the unknown corners within the labyrinth to discover another opportunity in front of them.
These opportunities may have been highly desirous or ones that were overlooked by others traversing the same pathway. Rather than avoiding them, these women chose to seize the opportunities, making them into prospects of success.

Karon was “willing to step up to plate to do whatever was needed.” She explained, “I always watched for opportunities and I was there to step up to plate and tackled things that others would not. There were always opportunities along the way and I just kept jumping at them.”

As Glenna discussed her career progression, she stated, “There was always an opportunity that came along when I needed it and I took advantage of it.”

Jan was an initiator and had a numbers of significant firsts in her career. She initiated sports programs for females at the junior high level and was the first female coach. She instigated the Sioux Falls Teachers’ Association. Her passion for struggling students resulted in starting an alternative school in addition to the many new programs in the schools where she was principal. She was the first woman to serve as the chair of the appropriations committee in the legislature. These are but a few of her ‘firsts’. However, Jan’s ambition did not stop with herself but instead, she was ambitious for other women; to mentor, to share knowledge, to help them succeed and to advocate for their rights.

The ability these women demonstrated to enter unknown territory was characterized by Regan and Brooks (1995) who discovered that the women they studied had the ability to move ahead to the unknown, give equal weight to mind and heart, and enabled others to consider options in new and different ways.

Ambitious is a goal oriented word. The research does not point to women leaders as ambitious but instead tend to use softer words in leadership styles such as being aware
of one’s own weaknesses, giving credit to others and being concerned about the welfare of employees (Accenture, 2007). Women’s leadership styles are described as inclusive of others, collaborative, and consensus building (Wesson & Grady, 1994, Regan & Brooks, 1995). Instead of defining ambition as a leadership characteristic, it would best be viewed as a personality trait of these three women.

The overarching feature of **caring** was intricately woven throughout these women’s lives and stories. Sergiovanni (1992) believed the servant leader understands that serving others is important. The desire to help students and teachers be successful was a goal of each woman. Both Jan and Glenna had a strong passion for those students that did not fit in the normal system, and thus, they were central to the success of an alternative high school.

In her work at the alternative school, Glenna related how she was once called the “military lady” and attributed it to the fact that “I cared so deeply about the students.”

This same passion for students with special needs was evident with Jan. “I ended up teaching those kids and developed a passion for those kids. I became an advocate for those types of kids.” Her compassion for the students was more than just on the surface. “People that worked with me (kids and families) knew I cared.”

Karon demonstrated her care and compassion by stating, “I tried to keep the best interest of teachers and kids at heart.” She later explained, “What really drove me was creating better opportunities for teachers and kids.”

Glenna spent a large portion of her life giving back to the community. This had been modeled to her in her early life and she credited her parents by stating, “My parents were active in the community and showed early on that that was important.”
The same generosity was central to Jan’s life. “Throughout my childhood, my parents had other kids stay with us and taught us to share and respect others that had less and had life tougher than we did.”

Caring was a common characteristic that was supported in much of the research of women leaders. Regan and Brooks (1995) found caring central to the women in the study of relational leadership. This was supported in the Caliper study where it was found that due to women’s genuine caring and understanding about where others are coming from, they are better able to influence others to their points of view (Caliper, 2005). Additionally, Aburdene and Naisbitt (1985) suggested that women bring a style of management into the work force that is more caring and intuitive than that of their male counterparts who lead with a more traditional approach.

The anecdotal stories shared by the individuals close to these three women explicitly spoke to their caring natures. A close friend described Glenna as having the “tenacity and courage in doing what is best for the children with whom she worked.”

A friend and mentor of Jan’s, stated, “Jan has one of the most caring personalities for people undergoing serious challenges.”

In 2004, Karon was highlighted for her service to the South Dakota Department of Education. Her caring nature was evident:

Over the course of the past three decades, Karon Schaack became a friendly and familiar face of the South Dakota Department of Education. Friendly because Karon interacted with educators as her friends. Familiar in that Karon was always a reliable representative of Department efforts. Clearly, Karon earned the respect of South Dakota's educational
community as a leader with a commitment and passion for quality schools. Without exception, her actions were driven by her priorities for learning and learners” (TIE Newsletter, 2004).

The legacies of caring and compassion encompassed each woman’s life story.

**Unique Characteristics**

Research relies on commonality to bring validity to a study. However, in any case study, the intention is to know extensively and intensively about a single case. There is no intention to generalize to the larger group, but rather to understand the intricacies of this particular specimen. Creswell (2002) explained qualitative research as “an exploration and understanding of a central phenomenon” (p. 50).

It was the individualism and uniqueness of each woman and their story that was intriguing. Individual personalities of each female took on the unexpected challenges throughout their labyrinths with different approaches, leading them to the common recognition as a female leader in the State of South Dakota. However, each of their exits from their labyrinths resulted in unique life stories. The following diagram and ensuing discussion includes self-identified personality traits that each woman repeatedly mentioned throughout their interviews. Characteristics of those pervasive traits contributed to each woman’s approach to their leadership style. Additionally, each woman presented an overarching pervasive theme that ran throughout their entire life-stories, defining who they were within their careers and beyond.
Diagram 5: Unique Characteristics

**Uniquely Glenna**

Glenna was described by a former student as having “a winsome, effervescent face. Her jovial and convivial smile is very warming, which gladdens the hearts of her pupils. … Her rich, brown, sparkling eyes give her away…” Glenna approached life with a sense of humor, which she credited to her father. Always active and moving, Glenna immersed herself in public service, working with others stating, “I was never isolated professionally…”

Glenna provided an oxymoron throughout her story as she repeatedly described herself as “always in charge” and having a “take charge personality”. She consistently found herself “in a position of leadership”, starting in her high school years and
continuing throughout her career. The incongruous component was her perceived sense of collaboration as an individual that is “always in charge”. She professed herself to be “intolerant of those that didn’t move as quickly or think as quickly as I do”. Balancing the strong “take charge personality” with the intuitive need to be collaborative perhaps presented a challenge throughout her life. She never viewed herself “a boss” and stated, “I worked with others,” and later added, “…I have the ability to listen to others, collaborative, and I have mutual respect for others.” Her shared deference for others was the key that kept her humble, adding to her strong caring instinct.

The research supports women’s collaborative spirit. Regan and Brooks (1995) described women’s behavior as inclusive. Women tended to reach out to people, ask for help when needed, gathered opinions, and collaborated to get the job done. Aburdeen and Naisbitt (1985) found that women bring characteristics of openness, inclusion and empowerment for employees. Collaboration, consensus-building, and empowerment described by Wesson and Grady (1994) were characteristics common to a more flexible organizational structure, which was common to the leadership styles of the women in these studies.

Glenna’s ability to “take charge” and to “build consensus” were key factors in her omnipresent involvement in the community. Besides volunteering time, she was responsible for participating and leading dozens of fund raisers. The importance of community service had been modeled by her parents and she followed their example. She adopted the statement once made by a friend of her that stated, “Work in your community as that is your rent for being here on earth”. So she put back all she could into the community and was supported by her husband and her children. Glenna’s service for the
greater good of her community was pervasive throughout her entire career and into retirement.

Characteristically Karon

The Caliper study (2005) found women leaders to have an inclusive, team building leadership style of problem solving and decision making. Karon grew in her collaborative spirit over time. “I saw myself become more comfortable with shared leadership over time. This included networking and taking in lots of points of view and weighing decisions and that was always what I wanted to do and able to do.”

Karon had a strong sense of responsibility from the outset of her life. She attributed this to being the oldest as well as the time period in which she was raised. Responsibility was evident throughout her career and obvious in the different tasks she took on at the outset in the Department of Education. She took her leadership role seriously, and carried an air of professionalism in all situations. The responsibility she took on as a young woman in caring for her siblings, continued into her retirement years while caring for both her mother and her husband.

Karon appeared to struggle more than the other two women in balancing her role as a mother and a career woman. She talked of the age in which Betty Frieden’s (1963) book, The Feminine Mystic attacked the popular notion that women of that time could only find fulfillment through childbearing and homemaking. She admitted to feeling: …caught between the new and old ways of thinking. In the early years of my marriage, and when I was a Mom with two children, all my peers were stay at home women. I truly wanted to be accepted and liked but I knew
that my peers probably talked about me in unkind ways for not being the stay at home mom.

The beginning phases of her career were influenced by her husband’s job changes and thus her early travels through the labyrinth appeared to take on additional twists and turns. Her strong sense of responsibility did not allow her to make choices that were not in the best interest of her husband and children. Throughout her story, she was obviously tormented with the inability of being able to achieve an advanced degree. Motherhood and circumstances related to family continued to provide roadblocks along the way. “Bottom line was I could not put it together as a family.”

Throughout her career, Karon embraced changes and challenges which were advantageous in her ascent to the position of the Secretary of Education. Changes due to new leadership also resulted in her stepping back to a different role at different junctures. Karon maintained her professionalism throughout all the changes. Dr. Rick Melmer (2004) described her as a “servant leader”, humble and hardworking, Karon took on different roles gracefully. A close friend and co-worker had stated, “Karon was a real class act in accepting the changes and always a great supporter of the newly appointed department secretary.”

Distinctively Jan

Jan can be described as straightforward and describes herself repetitively as “candid” throughout her story. “My directness and candor is often a criticism and sometimes it is also seen as strength,” Jan stated. She related that she was “not afraid to tell people my positions”, something that she carried with her in her ongoing fight for women’s rights. Unlike the other two women, Jan admitted that collaboration was not
part of her way of getting things done. “Good or bad – I became less collaborative as it
slowed down the process. It was bad in the sense that people didn’t see me talking to the
group.”

Jan was also not afraid to stand up for what she felt was right and frequently
referred to herself as “passionate” about issues. A rebel might be used to describe her
when she joined the football team as the only female in junior high. She went on to
develop the first teachers’ associations due the inequities she saw against women and the
same passion carried her to continue to advocate for women’s rights specific to the
abortion issue. She was not afraid to take a stance and shared, “I went on the SDEA
board at state level and got kicked off due unwillingness to do what they wanted me to do
while in the legislature.”

Jan was responsible for a number of “firsts” throughout her life. She was the first
female to coach girls’ sports, started an outdoor life class, initiated the first teacher’s
association in her district, created a number of new programs as an administrator, and
started the alternative school to name a few. Her visionary ability was a trait that Regan
and Brooks (1995) identified as characteristic of women in their study who had the ability
to move ahead to the unknown. Vision was defined as “the ability to formulate and
express original ideas, enabling others to consider options in new and different ways”
(Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 36).

Throughout Jan’s life, she remained passionate in defending the rights of women
and individuals unable to advocate for themselves. Her most visible involvement was
through the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families, where she worked
passionately for the rights of women to have choices. Strongly criticized in the press
locally and nationally, Jan stood firm in her convictions. Less obvious to the outside world, Jan was always an advocate for children with special needs as a teacher, administrator, and in her time within the legislature. Jan’s compassion and passion were encompassing character traits that contributed to her leadership story.

“In charge”, “responsible” and “direct and candid”; a formidable group of strong women leaders in South Dakota. Regardless of the individual personality traits these women exhibited throughout their lives, they emerged from their labyrinths, greeted by strong supporters full of admiration. Lives well lived, each unique to themselves.
CHAPTER VI
RESPONDING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this chapter, conclusions on the findings of this study are reported in response to the study’s research questions. The purpose of the life-history study was to explore the career pathways of three female leaders in both educational and political fields in South Dakota. Specifically, I sought to identify the traits and opportunities guiding them to their positions of leadership in the traditionally male-dominated culture of South Dakota.

Research Questions

The central phenomenon of the study was based on the question: “What were the experiences and events that led three women to positions of leadership in South Dakota?”

Sub-questions of the study include:

5. What were the support systems for these women along their career paths?
6. What if any relationship did being female have to their perceived strengths and weaknesses?
7. How did specific events shape their career choices?
8. What influence did the culture of South Dakota have on their progression to a place of leadership?

Research Question 1: What were the support systems for these women along their career paths?

The most obvious support system for these women was their families. Family support began in their childhoods with immediate family and continued throughout their entire careers. Each woman stated that her siblings provided ongoing and continual
support throughout their careers. Parents provided foundational support of traditional
colorful childhoods with high expectations to further their educations and to be successful.

Additionally, to these particular female subjects, a significant key to success was
a supportive husband and family of their own. Back in the 1980’s while these women
were working to find their niche in leadership positions, Hansot and Tyack (1981) stated
that we lived in a world that was male defined and male run. They asserted that marriage
had opposite effects for men and women. Marriage was an asset, if not a tacit
requirement in upward mobility for men, whereas for women it was often a liability, if
not an actual barrier. These women proved this assertion to be inaccurate and in fact
found spousal support as key to their success.

As mothers, Glenna and Karon spoke of always putting their children first, but
this did not deter them from moving along in their careers. Karon felt conflicted as a
young mother, however. While most of her peers were stay at home mothers, she felt
colored between the old and the new ways of thinking. While she wanted to be liked, she
was sure her peers spoke unkindly of her choice.

The desire to be successful in both career and family was intuitive to the
“Boomer” women in generational studies (Orenstein, 2000). This was a resounding
theme throughout Karon’s life. The desire to put family first resulted in a number of
additional twists and turns along the labyrinth corridors for Karon. Her struggle in trying
to attain her advanced degree was influenced dramatically as she made choices to place
her family’s needs first. Rather than moving her family to Utah for doctoral work, she
chose to stay in South Dakota, which in retrospect may have been a critical component to
success within her labyrinth.
Much can be attributed to their spousal support. Jan’s decision to run for the legislature was never hampered by her husband, which was found to be determining factor by Carroll (1994) for women deciding whether or not to run for office. The lack of spousal support often forces women to leave political office due to the conflicts with their family lives (Thomas, Herrick, and Braunstein, 2002). This was definitely not the case for Jan who said her husband was not co-dependent at all nor did he expect her to fit a mold. He encouraged her to do whatever she wanted along the way and to take risks.

These three women could not specifically identify a particular mentor apart from family that supported them throughout their winding passageways to success. While there were different individuals who were colleagues and compatriots along the way, no one individual filled that role. Karon expressed some remorse at not having a specific mentor throughout her career to look to, but like the other women, found continual support from her immediate and extended family.

Due to the lack of mentoring, the women in Hill and Ragland’s (1995) study discussed a common thread of feeling that they were “the only one” or alone throughout their career. Jan found that she was initially watched and regarded with some scrutiny about her ability. Once she had proved herself, she found respect due to her intense attention to detail and research on different topics. However, she had to prove herself first. Without a mentor, Karon found herself immersed in a “close caste system” comprised of males at many junctures of her journey. Lack of external support required her to rely on her own intuition to guide her.
Conclusion of Findings – Research Question 1

Strong family support was encircling these women’s labyrinths. As each woman entered their own intricate but unknown labyrinth, family was there to prod them forward and to support them along their way. While taking the many unexpected twists and turns throughout their personal journeys, they were assured that family would be there to support them through any difficulty. Even more rewarding, was to find family members there to celebrate their accomplishments upon exiting.

Research Question 2: What if any relationship did being female have to their perceived strengths and weaknesses?

These women achieved executive positions in education and politics, demonstrated a strong desire to succeed and viewed themselves as leaders, despite the dominant stereotype of male leadership in their worlds. These women did not allow being female to be a barrier to their success, although they encountered complexities throughout the journey.

Glenna was the least affected by gender inequity throughout her career as a female. She related, “I never felt that being female held me back. I have a take charge personality and often overdid it. This does not mean I am not aware of the inequities some women deal with.” A classic example, however, of the perception of females specific to that time period was most evident when she shared in exasperation, “I was told by a gentleman that questioned my going on to college, that all I was going to do was change diapers someday.”

Both Jan and Karon corroborated that the “good ole boy” system was thriving throughout their careers. However, they used those experiences to learn from their male
counterparts and to establish associations which fostered their credibility as strong women leaders. Upon Karon’s arrival at the Department of Education, she found that the males had established their ground and she referred to them as the “good ole’ boys’ club”. Her way of dealing with the male domination was to work harder and to step up whenever needed.

It can be challenging for women to build their social networks to be successful leaders. The inability to break into the male social networks was one of the factors identified by Growe & Montgomery (1998) as a significant barrier to women being recognized for advancement. Ironically, even though women are viewed as more social beings, they often have less "social capital" in organizations than men. There appeared to be networks within the organizations these women were part of where decision-making occurred in informal contexts and these women were excluded from them. Hansot and Tyack (1981) pointed out that in the 1970’s and 1980’s, men could join all-male groups like the Rotary Clubs and the Elks and there gain significant information, friendships and political interaction. Jan talked about the men going to the Elks for social interaction and women were not allowed to attend.

Karon experienced a “closed-caste” system that was specific to the athletes in the school system. This type of behavior was documented by Hill and Ragland (1995) explaining that men act as gatekeepers, where deals are often made and agreements cut before women are even aware. Understandings are negotiated during golf or social interactions and women are not normally privy to those venues or decisions made outside the formal work setting. The ‘good ole’ boy’ network has frequently prevented women from moving forward to reach full potential.
While these women could have allowed themselves to attempt to reverse their course through the labyrinth, they instead pressed even more determinedly to move forward. Karon stated, “It made progression harder but I sometimes think that as a result I had to work harder and ended up with more skills which may not be all bad.” She added, “I still think it is easier for males as there is a network there. We – meaning females - are more “in” but still easier for men.”

Jan was initially held back from being given a principal position at the high school as there were concerns of a female being able to handle the discipline. Rather than being accepted on her merits, she explained, “I had to sell the fact that a female could do the job as an administrator.” Once she entered the legislature, there was suspicion about her ability to perform and more so, to lead as the chair of appropriations. “They did not trust me as the chairman of the appropriations and I worked really hard to make sure I understood the issue so that I could give people accurate information.”

Conclusion of Findings: Research Question 2

Gender did not influence these women from entering nor exiting their circuitous route along their journeys. In the same manner that a labyrinth is a two way lane, interaction with other people along the way was inevitable. It was not unusual that at times these women had to at times step aside to allow others to pass or had to move deftly by to get to the next juncture. Choosing to stop because of perceived barriers due to the male dominance along the way was not an option. Instead, these women pressed harder and faster to arrive at the exit and claim the leadership positions they had so adroitly demonstrated along the way.
Research Question 3: How did specific events shape their career choices?

Although all three women became educators, it was neither a calling nor the first choice, for Jan or Karon, and seemed the logical choice for Glenna. The preference to become involved in education for the women in this study was basically by default. Career guidance was not readily available and females during that time period were traditionally given the options of a nurse, a secretary, or a teacher. And teaching offered the most flexibility and job opportunities for these women to get their careers moving forward.

Glenna had always known she was going to college, and education was simply logical. “There were teachers in my family and not a lot of options in 1960; women were nurses, secretaries, or teachers.”

Jan’s original intention was a degree in social work. She was candid about not having a plan. “I never went to school thinking I was going to be a teacher but it happened.”

Karon did not enter college with teaching in mind and even graduated with a degree in broadcasting initially. When this degree did not lead to a job due to location, Karon chose to go into teaching. “I went back to school to get a teaching certificate in 1966. It was a practical decision to get teaching degree and NOT a calling, so I shopped for a campus where it took the least amount of time to complete the degree.”

The research supported this as a common phenomenon for many women, who often fall into traditional “female” professions, allowing them to combine family roles more easily than “male” professions (Eccles, 1994; Ware & Lee, 1988).
The three women could not specifically pinpoint what events lead to their success as a leader. In Gupton and Slick’s (1996) study, their respondents reported they had not carefully planned their ascent to the top. Their acquisition of position was often by default, tenure, a suggestion by a mentor or an opportunity that simply emerged.

These women took opportunities when they presented themselves. Each woman captured each new challenge that came along the way. Karon often talked about being willing to step up to the plate when there was a task to complete and furthermore stating it was always in her nature to seize an opportunity and to act on it. There were few women in leadership roles at the Department of Education at that time, something that Chase and Bell (1999) to be a common practice in their studies. While Glenna talked about life simply happening to her and taking her on a path, she pushed herself outside the norm. Jan continued to have opportunities come her way and once others recognized her skills, she was further pushed and encouraged into positions of leadership.

Research from the period of time in which these women were working to reach their potential suggested women that have achieved executive positions in education and who have broken through glass ceilings often demonstrated a strong desire to succeed and viewed themselves as leaders despite the white male leadership stereotype dominant in society during the 70’s and 80’s (Swiderski, 1988). Jan was faced with opposition in her quest to become one of the first female secondary principals in her district. There was concern of her inability to handle discipline. Lee, Smith, & Croninger, (1996) found that public perception favored men as better able than women to handle discipline, particularly at the secondary level. Men were also viewed as more capable than women
for working with boards of education who were predominately male. Rather than letting that hold her back, it made Jan more determined to push ahead to be accepted in that role.

Observations of these women’s careers validate they were not content in simply “doing a job”. One might say they got lucky, but it was much more than fate that transformed them into strong leaders. They lived life passionately and thus were able to advance their careers with the valuable leadership skills they had obtained along the way. They found and made opportunities for themselves along their journeys and never stopped learning and pushing for more. Many of the characteristics identified in the Caliper (2005) study were intuitive of these women. Persuasive motivation, assertiveness, willingness to risk, empathy, urgency, flexibility and sociability as well as their ability to be able to perceive things from multiple views of a situation gave them the unique advantage of reading situations perceptively.

Karon’s career opportunities were due to her early perseverance at stepping up to the plate and taking on tasks that no one else was really willing to do. Karon stated that her relationship with Governor Mickelson was “serendipitously” important to her career. They had known each other in college and as she stated bluntly, “I was a known quantity”. She was allowed to do extensive traveling with him and was involved in extra activities that helped her to better understand the big picture and position herself for her later appointment as Secretary of Education.

Glenna and Jan’s passion for struggling students gave them the opportunity to start the alternative schools. Seizing the opportunity and being recognized for their ability were common throughout their careers that included both educational as well as public service. Glenna dedicated extensive time and energy to community service and was
recognized for it. Jan felt compelled all of her life to help those that were unable to advocate for themselves. Thus her involvement in the alternative school as well as in the movement for women’s choice was extremely important to her.

**Conclusion of Findings: Research Question 3**

It was not possible to determine which specific events precipitated the career successes for these women. Nor is it possible to pinpoint the exact time when they arrived at the center of their labyrinths and were recognized as leaders in their fields. As they moved along their undefined paths, they sometimes chose to run and skip, while at other times, they moved ahead deliberately and with caution. Most importantly however, they continued on a determined course with passion and the aspiration to make a difference in the lives of others.

**Research Question 4: What influence did the culture of South Dakota have on their progression to a place of leadership?**

The conservative culture of South Dakota may have influenced some women to take a path of less resistance in life. This was not the case for these aggressive females. If anything, it had the opposite affect. These women worked hard, stood their ground, and moved beyond the norm to become well respected in their leadership roles.

Both Glenna and Jan struggled with the obsession of the general public in regards to moral issues that consumed large amounts of time in the legislature and other political venues. Glenna said that the conservativeness of the state did not influence her either way but instead made her more determined to not let it stand in her way.

In the same way, Jan found it very frustrating to see how few people would step up to the plate on issues that were controversial. She has always viewed herself as a risk
taker and doing things outside the box. She felt it actually made her work harder to prove her herself in both the educational setting and in the legislature,

That same type of determination and hard work was evident with Karon. She lent an interesting perspective that influenced my thoughts about women’s opportunities in South Dakota. As females, they “we know how to work hard which is recognized,” Karon stated.

The study gave cause for me as the researcher to rethink my preconceived notions of the negative impact of living in the state of South Dakota on female leadership success. A review of the literature specific to this study paints a dismal picture of the state of South Dakota for women with aspirations. In retrospect, however, I have surmised that the opportunities for women with ambition may in fact be more attainable than in other locations. In a state with a small population, visibility in leadership positions allows individuals, both male and female, to move aggressively through the ranks of leadership. The political and educational circles are often closely intertwined in a state the size of South Dakota with individuals wearing manifold hats and involved in numerous leadership activities. The recognition in one entity spills over into other entities, thus building on the continued acknowledgement of a small group of leaders. These three women were “known quantities”, as Karon stated in her interview. It could be deduced that a combination of factors played into their success. Aggressive personalities with strong leadership and interpersonal skills were evident among all three. But perhaps it was just important to be in the right spot at the right time – and that right spot was South Dakota.
This is the optimism that I can bring to women in the state of South Dakota. Women need to be proactive in their aspirations rather than to bemoan the gender inequality issues related to leadership. To break through stereotyping that might otherwise pigeonhole women’s talents, females need to examine and look beyond typecasts of what women are thought to be able to do. Time should not be spent disproving stereotypes or identifying gender inequities, but instead learn from those that have been successful. The women in this study did not expend energy trying to prove who they were. They forged ahead to make a difference.

“Great Faces, Great Places – South Dakota” – new meaning and new relevance to me as it should to others.

Conclusion of Findings: Research Question 4

Envision a large labyrinth from one side of the state of South Dakota to the other. Along this path a number of familiar faces pass and converge in the center before returning to their original starting points. These interactions become the tales and stories of these women and the lives they touched along the way. An opportunity to take from those that have succeeded and to lend a hand to those that need support is what each of us should take from our own labyrinth experiences. South Dakota provides opportunities for all individuals, regardless of gender.

Summary

Many of the traditional ways of talking and thinking about leadership can continue to mask the strengths women bring to their successful lives as leaders. The results of this study show that with or without early support these women had
accomplished extraordinary achievements in their respective fields. These women’s own tenacity and optimism have played an important role in their accomplishments.

The matters of poverty and inequitable representation facing South Dakota women requires attention from policymakers, advocates, and researchers concerned with women’s status. However, without proper representation in the political process, many of the issues facing women in South Dakota today will not be addressed. Although women constitute a minority of elected officials at both the national and state levels, their presence has grown steadily over the years. As more women hold office, women’s issues are also becoming more prominent in legislative agendas (Carroll, 2001).

For women aspiring to careers in leadership roles whether education, politics, or outside those realms, it would be naïve to say that the glass ceiling has been shattered not only in South Dakota, but nationwide. Still, women have made substantial progress at moving into positions of upper management and senior leadership. As modeled throughout these stories, women in positions of leadership should extend a helping hand to those women following behind them, and allow the entire workforce to move in the direction of gender equity.

South Dakota, along with other states similar in size and geography, offer women extensive opportunities to take on roles as leaders. The small population and the opportunity to become a ‘known quantity’ allows individuals, male and female, to be involved in multifaceted capacities, something that may not be possible in a larger state with layers of administration. It is incumbent on women who have achieved positions of leadership to encourage and mentor other women along the path towards reaching their full potential.
This study drew attention to three women who contributed to the state of South Dakota and were recognized for their leadership in a number of capacities. Grady and LaCost (2004) highlighted three women that held prominent places in United State’s history for their contributions in the efforts to achieve equality; Linda Brown, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King. “They hold their places in history either by choice or by chance…. We are all part of the collective effort to achieve equality. We accept our roles in this effort whether they come to us by chance or by choice. In our efforts, we contribute to the history of the struggle” (p. 142).

Recommendations

Practical Application Recommendations

1) The need to continue to develop and expand programs in career guidance and career planning for females, particularly those in small isolated areas.

2) The need to provide support for young women entering their professions, as balancing career and family continues to be challenging.

3) The need to provide females for opportunities to become involved in the political process at both local and state levels through internships and shadowing programs.

4) The need to provide females with mentoring opportunities with strong women leaders in and out of their chosen fields.

5) The need to provide mentored female leadership roles in education at all levels within schools and departments of education.

Recommendations for Further Research

1) The need exists to research opportunities in leadership capacities within the realm of 21st Century Skills.
2) The need exists to research on how to facilitate confidence and risk-taking experiences for young females to increase their abilities to better prepare them for leadership positions.

3) The need exists to research the impact of growing up in small isolated areas of rural states upon the success of females entering leadership roles.

4) The need exists to research the impact of family values and support systems on the success of females’ leadership abilities.
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APPENDIX A

(Phone Transcription)
Initial Request for Participation

I am currently working towards my doctorate in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The subject of my dissertation is a life-history study is to increase the understanding of the pathway of South Dakota females in positions of leadership specifically in education and politics. You have been identified as a leader in the state and thus I am asking if you would consider participating in this study. It would be my hope that the process and results of this study will assist you as a participant to reflect on your life’s progression towards leadership and career achievement.

I will be requesting that you take part in a series of two to three interviews that will give you the opportunity to share your thoughts regarding your progression through your career to becoming an identified leader in our state.

I will be audio-taping all interviews to ensure accuracy, after which you will be provided a written copy of the interview transcripts to ensure accuracy. The interviews will be scheduled at your convenience to minimize disruption of your workday.

I am requesting that I be allowed to identify you in the study due to your high visibility and status in the state of South Dakota as a strong leader. I will be providing with all transcriptions for your review prior to any analysis. You will have the opportunity to edit, restrict, or add comments as you deem necessary prior to final publishing.

By agreeing to participate, I am hoping that you may benefit as it will allow you to reflect on the progression of your career and the attainment of your current leadership status in South Dakota.

Would you be interested in participating in this study? If so I will be mailing an informed consent and letter to you following our conversation. Are there any questions that I could answer at this time? Thank you for your time and you will be hearing from me in the near future.
Dear,

This serves as a follow-up to our conversation regarding your agreeing to participate in the research study regarding your career path. You should have received a letter and informed consent form from me in the mail.

I would like to arrange for our first interview. I will be happy to meet with you at your office if you so desire at the most convenient time for you. Following are some dates and times that may work best for us. Please let me know if these coincide with your schedule.

Date and times:

Thanks for agreeing to support me in this endeavor!

Melody
APPENDIX C

(Letter to accompany informed consent form)

Date:

Participation in Life-History Study:
South Dakota Women in Political & Education Leadership

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation. As mentioned on the phone, my plans are to meet with you in an on-site interview. I would ask for approximately two hours of your time to conduct an in-depth interview regarding your pathway to leadership in South Dakota. This would be followed by two to three shorter conversations to clarify information. If there are newspaper articles, memorandums, meetings of minutes, or other types of material that would better help me understand your leadership qualities, I would appreciate the opportunity to review and have copies of these documents if possible.

I have included a copy of the questions I hope to have answered during my study in order to give you an opportunity to review them. Also enclosed is an informed consent form for your review and signature. Please feel free to contact me with any questions via e-mail or phone, especially regarding any questions specific to the informed consent. I will pick up this form at our meeting.

I will contact you next week to set up a time for our interview.

I would be willing to provide a resume upon your request as a way for you to better know my background as well.

I want to sincerely thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project.

Sincerely,

Melody Schopp
605 848 2047
melody.schopp@state.sd.us

Barbara LaCost, PhD, Secondary investigator and advisor
402 472 0988
blacost1@unl.edu
APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

This is an initial interview regarding your life’s progression to becoming a strong female leader in South Dakota. This interview will help to guide your thoughts and you may add to the conversation at any point. My questions serve as prompts to your thought processes. Do you have any questions prior to starting? If you are ready to begin, we will begin the tape recording.

1) Let’s begin with your early years. Tell me about your family and your childhood growing up.

2) What sort of importance was placed on education in your family as a child and young adult?

3) Relate some experiences that you feel were critical to your development.

4) What sort of successes and/or failures did you have along the way in your educational experience?

5) How would you describe your career progression?

6) What specific events do you feel shaped your career choice?

7) What specific events do you feel shaped your choice to assume a leadership position within your career?

8) What strategies have you implemented in carrying out specific objectives in your career path?

9) Tell me about the support systems you had throughout your career progression.

10) Describe a specific person/relationship that helped you to achieve your career goal.

11) What sort of influences did your family (spouse/children) have on your career?
12) What influence did those support systems have for your career success?

13) Tell me about your professional goals.

14) Tell me about your personal goals

15) What do you find absorbing, involving, enthralling both personally and professionally?

16) What do you perceive to be your greatest strengths in relation to your career?

17) What do you perceive to be your greatest weaknesses in relation to your career?

18) What if any relationship does being female have to your perceived strengths and weaknesses?

19) Do you believe the culture of South Dakota has influenced your progression to your place of leadership? If yes, can you describe at least one specific instance.

20) I am going to offer you two statements: Your ability to lead has shaped your personality. Your personality has shaped your ability to lead. Which statement most clearly describes you.

21) What changes, if any, have you made in your leadership style as you progressed through your career?

22) What differences do you see between males and females within your professional arena and their approach to leadership?

23) What if any changes would you have made along your career path?

24) Where do you perceive yourself to be professionally within 10 years?
APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

"A Life-History Study: South Dakota Women in Educational and Political Leadership"

The following information is being provided to assist you in determining if you would choose to participate in this life-history qualitative study. This study is being conducted by Melody Schopp, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The purpose of this life-history qualitative study is to increase the understanding of the pathway of South Dakota females in positions of leadership specifically in education and politics. The researcher expects that the process and results of this study will assist you as a participant to reflect on your life’s progression towards leadership and career achievement. You are invited to participate in this study because of the leadership roles you have played in South Dakota.

Data for this study will be collected through interviews with you at a site of your choosing and supporting documents. I will be glad to meet with you in your office or at any location you recommend. The interviews will be scheduled at your convenience to minimize disruption of your workday. Participation in this study will require approximately two hours for an initial interview. Any follow-up interviews or contact should require no more than forty-five minutes or so. Interviews will be audio-taped to ensure accuracy.
There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the primary investigator at any time at 605-848-2047 or secondary investigator and advisor, Barb LaCost at 402-472-0988 or blacost11@unl.edu. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators, or the University of Nebraska or any agency with which you are affiliated. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Please check if you agree to be audio taped during the interview.

Please initial if you agree to be personally identified in the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Research Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melody Schopp, Principal Investigator</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbara LaCost, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Office (402) 472-0988
February 11, 2008

Melody Schopp
Dr. Barbara LaCost
12178 SD HWY 73
Meadow, SD 57644

IRB# 2006-12-151 EP

TITLE OF PROJECT: Multicase Study: South Dakota Women In Leadership

Dear Melody:

This is to officially notify you of the approval of your project’s Continuing Review by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the committee’s opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the subjects in this study. Your proposal seems to be in compliance with DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46).

1. Uploaded on NIH grant is the IRB approved Informed Consent form for this project. Please use this form when making copies to distribute to your participants. If it is necessary to create a new informed consent form, please send us your original so that we may approve and stamp it before it is distributed to participants.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others;
- Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to provide the Board with a review and update of the research project each year the project is in effect. This approval is valid until December 17, 2008.

If you have any questions, please contact Shirley Horstman, IRB Administrator, at 472-9417 or email at shorstman1@unl.edu.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dan R. Hoyt, Chair
For the IRB
APPENDIX G
Coding Correlation
Common Themes/Characteristics

Jan
Leader
classes for leadership
class officer
and leadership training
influence

Glenna
Leader
position of leadership
always a leader
always in charge

Karon
leader
leadership opportunities
class leadership
opportunities
vice president in my senior class
leadership roles
known quantity
able to provide leadership
position of leadership
naturally elected
always “in charge.”
believe I am a natural leader
due to my experiences in life.
shared leadership over time

Confident
strong independent self-reliant
to be independent
self reliant.
stand up for myself
responsibilities
independent
had the ability
natural talent
sense of confidence.
what I believe in makes me
do what I do.
No regrets

Confident
cannot remember failures
Nothing that stopped me
found it easier to get
forgiveness than to get
permission
no negative forces
think moderately
happy and content

Confident
Not being afraid
Always in charge
Believed
Able to provide leadership
Naturally elected

Risk taker - Courageous
became an advocate
got kicked off
involvement in that
movement
felt discriminated against
passionate
took on the issue
less collaborative
working behind the scenes
willing to take a risk.
Courage
take risks
risk taker
proved myself

Risk taker
more guts than brains
challenge
pushed myself

Risk taker
lots of big ideas
ty my wings
not being afraid
Hard worker
studied hard
put money away
also very active
hard worker
involved in lots of activities
overextended

Hard worker
double major
various jobs
Education was extremely
important
completed my degree in
three years

Hard worker
value of work was important
lessons of timeliness and
preparation
willing to step up to plate
worked furiously
wanted to keep the work
going
always watched for
opportunities
step up to plate
tackled things that others
would not.
stepped up and was
recognized for it.

High Expectations
wanted to be the best
eample
proved myself
studied hard

High Expectations
best teacher possible
best mother and spouse
wanted what was best
honors
curriculum that was difficult
1st chair oboe

High expectations
fair and had maintained
high ethical standards
children were to do well in
school
took accountability seriously
and holding others
accountable

Caring
share and respect others
valuable in helping me to
learn about other’s lives
relationships with those
students have stayed strong
developed a passion for
those kids
now a volunteer
trying to help people
cared.
advocate for children
lot of strong relationships
all working with me
gained respect
developed his respect
give credit

Caring
mutual respect
learned to listen and to be
sensitive
cared so deeply
Respect
golden rule
mutual respect for others

Caring
not concerned about my own
position as much as I was in
accomplishing the goals
really drove me was creating
better opportunities for
teachers and kids
the best interest of teachers
and kids at heart.
Ambitious/initiator
first women to coach outside
I started an outdoor life class
to clean things up
started the alternative high school
started new programs
establish the first

Ambitious
always an opportunity
took advantage of it
able to take advantage of

Ambitious
always opportunities along the way and I just kept jumping at them.
supported whoever needed whatever
tackled things others wouldn’t

Family
Dad was very strict
very close family

Family
Family – spouse and children.
Siblings very supportive.

Family
family was very supportive personal goals were family centered
Straightforward
directness and candor.
directness and candor
directness
candid
not afraid to tell people my position
directness
not afraid to tell people what my position

Rebel – Not afraid to stand up against the Norm
became an advocate
got kicked off
involvement in that movement
felt discriminated against
passionate
took on the issue
less collaborative
working behind the scenes

Initiator
first women to coach outside
I started an outdoor life class
to clean things up
started the alternative high school
started new programs
establish the first PAC
started the teacher’s organization

UNRELATED THEMES
In charge
always in charge
very determined
always in charge
organizes
always in charge
take charge
to be in charge
take charge personality
always take charge
always been in charge

Collaborative
ability to listen to others
willing to work with others
collaborative
mutual respect for others

Active
parents were active
multiple things going on
outgoing
aggressive in life.
intolerant of those that don’t move as quickly

Sense of humor
sense of humor
always amused!...
, have a sense of humor, very collaborative
worked with others.
never isolated

Responsible
Oldest
sacrifices to be made
oldest
oldest makes a difference
me taking care of the rest of my siblings!
a lot of child care fell on me
birth order made a difference
no specific support systems

Shared Leadership
I am a natural leader due to my experiences in life.
able to provide leadership
shared leadership over time

Servant leader
not concerned about my own position as much as I was in accomplishing the goals
really drove me was creating better opportunities for teachers and kids
the best interest of teachers and kids

Traditional background
typical 50’s “Leave it to Beaver”.
Catholic school
the church
Dad was quite traditional
typical stay at home
traditional mother

Conflicted values
creature of age in which I grew up
significant thread woven The Feminine Mystique
caught between the new and old ways of thinking
wanted to be accepted and liked
mentor - she was a very
traditional woman, which may not have helped me set and achieve career goals in the long run.

**Competitive**

competed
taste of success and competitiveness.
success

**Frustrations**

Failure to find a way to access further higher
crashing halt with the death of my daughter
experienced a tremendous struggle to overcome my grief and rebound as a loving mother and wife.
intention to get back into seeking my degree

Nothing really shaped my career

**Tolerant**

great deal in tolerance of differences and styles and backgrounds over time.

**Visionary**

able to see big picture

**Responsibility**

Oldest
sacrifices to be made
oldest
oldest makes a difference
me taking care of the rest of my siblings!
a lot of child care fell on me
birth order made a difference
no specific support systems
### Underlying Themes: Birth Order, Family, Time period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oldest child - born 1942</th>
<th>Born in 1942 - Raised like an only child</th>
<th>Oldest of 5 - born 1942 Being the oldest in the family is part of who you are period of time shaped me as others in the 1950’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lived with grandmother and mother until 3 as dad was in WWII and grew up with 2 independent women.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband gave strong support. Encouraged her to do whatever she wanted.</td>
<td>Family – spouse and children. Siblings very supportive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad was always treasurer for legislative races and all work done in living room</td>
<td>Siblings were very supportive – brother and sisters always cheering for her</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not as many options in 1960, as nursing, secretary and teaching, so teaching seemed to be the only option</td>
<td>Knows that parents would have supported anything she did. Father was quite traditional in belief that the best route was a nurse or teacher for a female.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H
LABYRINTH OF LEADERSHIP

Diagram 3
APPENDIX I

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

Diagram 4

Foundational Personal Characteristics
- High Expectations
- Confidence
- Hard Work

Intuitive Leadership Characteristics
- Courage
- Ambition
- Caring
APPENDIX J

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

Diagram 5

Unique Approaches to Leadership

Glenna
- In Charge
  - Collaborative
  - Sense of humor

Karon
- Responsible
  - Servant Leader
  - Shared Leadership

Jan
- Direct and Candid
  - Rebel
  - Initiator

Pervasive Themes
- Community Involvement
- Willingness to step up to new challenges
- Passion for rights of women and individuals
Melody Schopp requested that I complete an educational audit on her multicase qualitative dissertation entitled, “The Labyrinth To Leadership.” The purpose of the audit was to determine the degree to which the results of her study are trustworthy. The audit was conducted in May of 2008.

Huberman and Miles (in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) note that audits “seem to have decidedly salutary effects, notably the encouragement of systematic record keeping and reflexivity” (p. 439). Although systematic record keeping requires additional time and energy by the researcher, the methodological process itself as well as the resulting “audit trail” serve to support the credibility of the research process and findings.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define the audit process as an examination of both the *process* and *product* of the inquiry. Examining the process is designed to ensure that the informants are fairly represented in the recorded accounts; examining the final product is designed to ensure the accuracy of the findings as supported by data.

To examine both the research process and the product, I completed the following steps in reviewing materials for the audit:

1.) Reviewed and examined the transcriptions of participant interviews.

   There were three participants interviewed for this study. Due to the untimely death of the transcriber, recordings were not available. The researcher assured this auditor that tapes were transcribed verbatim and are correct. Documentation from the transcriber verifies that the “transcription was written verbatim from the content of the recorded data. The tapes are being stored in my possession in the Lemmon Elementary fire-proof safe until requested from the researcher.”

2.) Reviewed folders that contained the following types of information:
   - Dissertation Draft
   - IRB Approval
   - IRB Informed Consent Forms
   - Participant’s Curriculum Vitae
   - Other Participant Professional Information
   - Interview Questions
   - Interview Notes
   - Documentation of Contacts and Correspondence
   - Interview Transcripts
   - Coding Notes and Groups

   **Findings:** The folders included required information.

3.) Checked permission forms from participants.
Findings: The required forms were signed.

4.) Examined all transcripts and coded information from interviews, and coding groups.

I reviewed coded transcripts and coding folders to check for accuracy of data identification.

Findings: The data supported identified themes.

5.) Read and examined dissertation draft provided by Melody.

The final draft manuscript totaled 138 pages with provision for appendices.

I read the final draft in its entirety, directing my attention to Melody’s adherence to the purpose of the study and research questions as outlined; design of the study including data collection and sampling; the researcher’s role in the study; data analysis procedures; verification strategies; and use of theory and literature. I paid particular attention to determining whether the findings were supported by the data.

Findings: Theory and literature were important to understanding the data in this study. Melody began her literature review with an Overview of Women’s Status Across the States, then reviewed Women in Education Leadership, An Overview of Women in South Dakota, Women and Leadership Styles, and Women and Support Systems. In keeping with qualitative inquiry, she used ample description, document notations and direct quotations to report data, explain findings, and support her resulting conclusions.

6.) Revisited primary questions of the audit and completed final review of the dissertation draft.

The focus of the audit was two part: to review process and product. As a final check, I reviewed both the overall process Melody used in her study and the procedures she used.

Findings: Appropriate procedures were used in producing the product with the collected data; the data were accurately reported in the product.

Based on the preceding, the following conclusions are offered:

It is my opinion that the focus of the study remained consistent with the purpose as stated in the IRB Consent to Participate in Research.

Procedures used in the study, including data collection and analysis, were followed as outlined. The process as explained by the researcher was clear and direct.
The data were clearly and concisely presented using the participants’ own words.

There is evidence that the following verification procedures were used:
- Triangulation
- Member checks
- External Audit

Melody brought to her study her own “experience as a female who had achieved a degree of recognition for my leadership skills while living in a traditional state and community.” Her personal experiences also lend credibility to the data analysis and findings.

In summary, the researcher satisfies the criteria for dependability and confirmability of findings.

Attested to this 13th day of May, 2008.

Kaye L. Peery, Ph. D.