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Mary Sue Terry: The Hero Who Defied the Double Bind

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In nearly 400 years, there has only been one. After hundreds of political office-holders, there has only been one. In terms of statewide government positions in all of Virginia, and throughout all the state’s history, there has only been one. The only woman ever to be elected to a statewide government position in Virginia’s history is Mary Sue Terry.

This fact alone can qualify Mary Sue Terry as a hero, but there is so much more to her heroic life. Baker (1993) published a stirring account of Mary Sue Terry’s unsuccessful, yet ultimately heroic effort to become the first woman governor of Virginia. The gubernatorial race of 1993 began with Terry holding a 30-point lead in the polls yet eventually losing to Republican candidate, George Allen. Losing was highly uncommon for Terry. She had a penchant for success in all stages of her life. For example, Terry served as class president at Westhampton College at the University of Richmond; she was a member of the House of Delegates; and most impressively she was the first and only woman in the state of Virginia to be elected into any statewide government
position. Mary Sue Terry was elected as the first female Attorney General of Virginia. Throughout her political career, she focused on becoming a tireless public servant, an effective politician, and agent of positive change in others. This ambition of improving others’ lives did not stop after she retired from politics; she later continued to influence thousands of people in a positive manner. Mary Sue Terry paved the way for a new generation of gender opportunity in politics, and she was a pioneer and inspiration for millions. Without question, Mary Sue Terry was, and is, a hero.

Since the dawn of humanity, there have been heroes of all types, ranging from physical action heroes to nurturant emotional heroes. These exceptional individuals are pervasive in the movies, in the news, and in social media. Human beings need heroes, and according to Allison and Goethals (2011), there are at least ten reasons why society needs heroes. These reasons include the fact that heroes give us hope, reveal our missing inner qualities, validate our preferred moral worldview, and deliver justice.

While it is clear that the world needs heroes, it is less clear what exactly defines a hero. Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo (2011) offered the following objective definition: “Heroism is the willingness to sacrifice or take risks on behalf of others or in defense of a moral cause.” Offering a different twist to heroism, Joseph Campbell (1988) once stated, “You could be a local god, but for the people whom that local god conquered, you could be the enemy. Whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative.” Consistent with this idea is Allison and Goethals’ (2011) contention that “heroism is in the eye of the beholder.” While there is no consensus regarding the definition of a hero, Mary Sue Terry has led a life that meets any reasonable set of standards for heroism.

The legendary Stan Lee (1962) once wrote that “with great power comes great responsibility.” Lee’s observation is based on the reality that people’s abuse of power often begets disaster. Ludwig and Longeneck (1993) describe the tragic consequences of misuse of power in the Bathsheba Syndrome. When people are given power, they are prone to ethical collapse and corruption. The Bathsheba Syndrome is named after the Biblical story of Bathsheba and King David in the Old Testament. The story tells the tale of King David committing
adultery with Bathsheba. After realizing his mistake, he was faced with the choice of either confessing his wrongdoing or covering up his sin. Rather than confess, he chose murder. King David believed he was invincible because of the power and title he held. Power producing immorality is frequently seen in the political arena, and in fact politics are often viewed as inseparable from corruption.

Far too common in politics we see men and women (but usually men) taking advantage of their power or acting unethically for personal benefit (Beggan & Allison, 2018). With dark political figures such as Duke Cunningham, Anthony Weiner, and Richard Nixon, it is easy to forget many of the inspirational and ethical heroes in politics. In fact, there are many honorable people in politics, one of them being Mary Sue Terry. Terry was a politician with integrity who never fell victim to the Bathsheba syndrome. Her high ethical standards and strong commitment to improving the lives of others made her a great role model and a hero for the Richmond community and the entire state of Virginia.

Richmond, the capital of the commonwealth of Virginia, is home to a quarter-million people, yet only a select few are heroes. This chapter focuses on Mary Sue Terry’s heroism in particular. Specifically, the goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how Terry’s life followed Joseph Campbell’s classic monomyth of the hero, how she underwent important personal transformations, how she transformed others in meaningful ways, what type of hero she was, and what heroic traits she displayed. From this analysis, the unmistakable conclusion that one can reach is that Mary Sue Terry is one of the most inspiring Richmond heroes in the city’s history.

mary sue terry and joseph campbell’s monomyth

While every hero may appear to be different, they all share something in common: their heroic life journey. Every hero travels along a similar developmental path which Joseph Campbell (1949) called the “hero monomyth” in his book, The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Within the monomyth there are three main stages: departure, initiation, and return. Within these stages there
are substages including the call to adventure, the road of trials, the crossing of the return threshold, and the freedom to live. The first stage, departure, consists of the hero being summoned on a journey, refusing the call, accepting the call, and leaving her world behind. The second stage, initiation, is composed of the hero undergoing trials and tribulations, receiving assistance, finding her missing inner quality, and accomplishing the ultimate mission. The final stage, the return, completes the hero’s journey and refers to the hero returning to her previous world to use her newfound knowledge to better the world (Campbell, 1949). These steps can be seen in nearly every hero's journey from Harry Potter to Katniss Everdeen to Superman. Furthermore, the monomyth is plainly apparent in real life heroes such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King, Jr. We now turn to the specifics of how Mary Sue Terry successfully completed Joseph Campbell's monomythic journey of the hero.

Population 15: Life in Critz, Virginia

Critz, Virginia is a town with a meager population of just 15 people. One of the 15 was Mary Sue Terry. She was born on September 28, 1947, in Martinsville, Virginia. Terry grew up in Critz with her two sisters and parents, inhabiting an apartment above the gymnasium of Hardin-Reynolds memorial school (Baker, 1993). Terry attended Hardin-Reynolds where both her parents were teachers. Her father taught agriculture and eventually became principal, while Terry’s mother taught math, chemistry, and worked as a librarian (Baker, 1993). When Terry was seven, her family moved to a farm in Patrick county alongside the Blue Ridge mountain range. After graduating from high school, Terry continued her studies at Westhampton College, now more commonly referred to as the University of Richmond.

Departure: Life at Westhampton College

As stated earlier, nearly all heroes complete Joseph Campbell’s monomythic journey of the hero. The departure is the first of three stages; during departure the hero is first called to do her heroic duty. Mary Sue Terry’s departure began in the 1960s when she left her hometown of 15 for the much larger Westhampton college in the state capital city of Richmond. When Terry
arrived on campus for the first time, she was instantly presented with an obstacle. The freshmen dorms at Westhampton College had no rooms available (Baker, 1993). Mary Sue Terry was forced to move into an upperclassmen dorm for her first year of college. Being in an upperclass dorm did not deter the motivated Mary Sue Terry. Instead, she conquered her obstacle by boldly introducing herself to as many students as she could. She also wanted to meet students in her class to gain their support to be elected class secretary. At Westhampton, Terry quickly gained a reputation as a determined, energetic, and focused young woman. She also played basketball and field hockey for the Spiderettes. On election day, with the odds stacked against Mary Sue Terry she won the election and became class secretary. She was also later elected as Westhampton College’s class president. The theme of the odds being against her is a recurring one throughout her life and especially her political career.

In the departure stage of the monomyth, the hero leaves for a foreign land, has a calling, and accepts it (Campbell, 1949). In Mary Sue Terry’s case, her foreign land was Westhampton College. She left her small comfortable home of Critz, Virginia for the much larger, complex, and completely different Westhampton College. Terry’s calling was to get involved and make a change. She achieved this by running for class secretary and successfully getting elected. At Westhampton, Mary Sue Terry’s calling was identified. She was destined to be involved in government and to make a positive change in the world.

However, this calling wasn't always clear to Terry. Her parents insisted that she get a degree in education when she first left for Westhampton College. After all, they were both teachers, and they knew a degree in education would secure Mary Sue a teaching job once she graduated (Allen, 1993). Despite her parents’ requests to become a teacher, Terry took the road less traveled, knowing she had a calling to change the world in a much bigger way. Another potential obstacle to Terry’s calling occurred when she was at Westhampton College. Terry recalls one occasion in which she spoke to her guidance counselor, stating she wanted to go to law school. Terry’s guidance counselor laughed at the thought, and argued that going to law school was both unladylike and pointless (Baker, 1993). In fact, her guidance counselor mentioned that even entertaining the idea of a career in law and government
was unladylike. At the time, the counselor was operating in a world in which very few women entered those fields, and certainly there were no major figures for Terry to have as role models. Terry would eventually change that by becoming the first and only woman to be elected to a statewide government position in Virginia. Despite what her parents and counselors told her, Mary Sue Terry followed her heart and pursued her calling to hold an important political office.

Initiation: A Political Life

Mary Sue Terry’s initiation began when she started her career in politics. As stated earlier, initiation is composed of the hero undergoing trials and tribulations, receiving assistance, finding her missing quality, and accomplishing the ultimate goal (Campbell, 1949). Throughout Terry’s career, she served eight years in the General Assembly, two terms as Virginia’s Attorney General, and was the runner-up for Governor of Virginia. With each of these accomplishments, Terry was a pioneer in unchartered territory, paving the way for future generations of women to enter the political arena.

Women and Leadership

During Terry’s foray into politics in the 1980s and 1990s, women faced many obstacles in gaining leadership roles. Even more so than today, women were the victims of bigotry, institutionalized discrimination, and sexism. Numerous theories have been proposed to explain why women have been hindered in their efforts to acquire leadership positions. These theories include human capital theory, evolutionary psychology, and the double bind hypothesis. Human capital theory states that humans have a finite amount of energy to put into the world, and women tend to use a lot of this energy into child-bearing and domestic responsibility. Evolutionary psychology explains that men gravitate to leadership positions because they are naturally more aggressive and dominant, while women tend to be more passive. Biological differences in physical strength produced a cultural that valued male attributes of power over female attributes of nurturance.
The double bind hypothesis argues that women face a quandary once they are in a position of leadership. Women encounter a lose-lose situation such that her leadership is criticized for being either too masculine or too feminine. If there were any human capital pressures or evolutionary forces at work to impede Mary Sue Terry, she defied them with her political acumen. However, there is no doubt that Terry was a victim of the double bind. Despite dealing with double-standards and lose-lose perceptions of her leadership, she was able to be elected and reelected as Attorney General in Virginia.

After Mary Sue Terry graduated from Westhampton College in 1969, she decided to pursue a law degree from the University of Virginia. At the time, a woman attending law school and graduating with a law degree was extremely uncommon. In fact, out of the class of 300 students that graduated with Terry, only 15 were women. Being in the minority, however, did not deter Mary Sue Terry and she successfully received her law degree. After graduating from law school in 1973, Terry joined a three-lawyer firm and worked as a part-time assistant commonwealth’s attorney. In 1977, Terry was elected to Virginia’s House of Delegates. In her campaign, Terry entered a tobacco-spitting contest in Stuart county. She did this to prove she was not too feminine to become a delegate. She was battling the double bind.

The double bind would become even more prevalent in Mary Sue Terry’s run for Attorney General in 1985. Her longtime poll taker, Harrison Hickman, recalls that when she was a young Democrat in the House of Delegates and began running for attorney general in 1985, "not 1,000 people knew her outside her family" (Allen, 1993). But Mary Sue Terry ran a very successful campaign and won the election for Attorney General. However, she would now have to fight an even greater battle, the double bind. Mike Allen writes:

*But Terry is tough to access, even on the most superficial level. When asked if she reads any magazines for fun, she says there are some -- but won't say what they are. She's so image-conscious she puts on makeup to go to 7-Eleven to buy The Washington Post on Sunday morning. A sister said Terry has stopped skiing with her family in Virginia because she doesn't like people to see her fall. Supporters argue that she's being held to an impossible -- and sexist -- standard. "It's tough to be a good-ole boy when you're a woman," said Dickerson, one of*
her two sisters. "People don't want their attorney general to be soft." Terry, who turned 46 last month, can be warm and witty, with a girlish giggle that runs in her family: During a sweltering visit to a farm exposition in Mineral, her consultants tried to hustle her under a pavilion for TV interviews. "I'm fine!" she said. "You guys are the ones who're sweating!" When someone asked kiddingly if she could fix him up with a date, Terry, who is single, chuckled heartily and said, "I haven't done too well fixing myself up." (Allen, 1993)

Clearly, Mary Sue Terry was struggling with the double bind problem that confronted women who dared to climb into highly visible leadership roles. She had to be extremely cautious with her appearance, her actions, and her personality. Remarkably, she was able to navigate the double bind as successfully as anyone possible could, demonstrating to millions of people that she could be an effective Attorney General.

After being elected as Attorney General, Mary Sue Terry was unsure of her length of tenure in office, and thus she was determined to get as much done as she could in her four years. As Attorney General, Terry reduced the blood-alcohol level required to prove drunk driving; she gave police additional tools to prosecute drug dealers; she increased penalties for sexual assault; she made stalking a crime; she joined forces with the federal officials to prosecute the dubious Lyndon LaRouche; and she forced Ford to recall 13,000 impaired ambulances across the country (Allen, 1993). She became increasingly popular with Virginia residents and when she pursued reelection she garnered 63% of the popular vote (Allen, 1993). Because Terry had gained the support of many Virginians, her next step was to run for Governor.

Terry was the Democratic Party's nominee for the governor of Virginia in 1993. Her opponent was Republican George Allen. Terry initially held a lead over Allen as she was a popular and well-known politician in Virginia. However, her lead would eventually evaporate due to the double bind. As stated earlier, Mary Sue Terry stayed out of the public eye to avoid being seen as too feminine. George Allen campaign attacked her for this by posting, "Have you seen this woman?" signs with a photo of Mary Sue Terry on them. George Allen and his campaign team also attacked Terry for being a single woman running for office. His campaign treasurer, James C. Wheat
III, implied that Allen would be more sensitive to family concerns than Terry because he had a wife and kids whereas Terry was unmarried. The exact quote from Wheat reads, "George (Allen) is a family-oriented person who understands those of us who have children and are concerned about crime, drugs, and educational and job opportunities" (Wheat, 1993). Terry supporters viewed this campaign approach as a sexist attack on Terry’s marital status. This issue became known as “mate-gate” in the gubernatorial race. The controversy surrounding mate-gate, combined with Virginia’s history of voting Republican, led to Terry finishing as the runner-up for Governor.

Despite the defeat, Mary Sue Terry’s work within Virginia’s government left a historic impact on the state. After losing the gubernatorial race in Virginia, Terry decided to step away from politics. She served many great years within Virginia’s government, but now it was time for her to take what she learned and give it back to her previous world, the University of Richmond. This journey homeward was a central part of her hero’s journey.

Return

The return phase of Joseph Campbell’s monomyth states that the completion of the hero’s journey is contingent upon the hero returning to her original world. The hero returns and shares what she has learned, drawing from her experiences and wisdom gained while on earlier stages of the hero’s journey (Campbell, 1949).

Mary Sue Terry returned from her political career to teach at the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at The University of Richmond. Here she taught an internship course alongside Professor Gill Hickman, and she also taught a leadership and crisis course alongside Professor Richard Couto (Moschino, 1996). Mary Sue Terry used the lessons she learned in public office and gave them back to her community and to the students attending her alma mater, the University of Richmond. She also consulted for Ferrum College, helping develop leadership programs, particularly for women (Stallsmith, 2007). She experienced firsthand how difficult it was to succeed as a leader because of the double bind and because of barriers placed against her gender. At Ferrum College she developed a program to give students, especially female students,
an opportunity to gain the skills necessary to be effective in leadership situations.

In addition to giving back to schools, Mary Sue Terry worked as a consultant for Microsoft Corporation using her connections to build relationships with state attorney generals on behalf of the technology giant (Stallsmith, 2007). She also was an active board member on the Richmond AIDS ministry and the 4-H foundation. Terry volunteered at the Richmond Hill Ecumenical Retreat Center, and was the conductor of the adult forum at the Holy Comforter Episcopal Church (Moschino, 1996).

Terry’s heroic journey came full circle when she moved back to her family’s farm in Patrick county. The farm was named Cooper’s Mill, and the Terry family ran the mill for well over a century until the early 1990s (Stallsmith, 2007). Cooper’s Mill is also where Terry announced her historic run for Attorney General in March of 1985 (Stallsmith, 2007). Mary Sue made it her mission to restore the family farm, which she now owns with her two sisters. The restoration involved rebuilding miles of fences, reclaiming fields, and several other tasks associated with running an active farm (Stallsmith, 2007). Terry stated, "I didn't think I would be doing this, building fences or calving cows." Terry’s work on the farm did not go unnoticed as she won the Clean Water Farm Award from the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District in 2004 (Stallsmith, 2007). "She took on a tremendous task in improving the farm, and it's one of the top-notch farms in the county," said trusted friend Lee Ann Collins, who first met Terry when they were in fifth grade. "She's always applied herself to whatever she was doing, whether it was her state job or getting the farm up to the standard she wanted" (Stallsmith, 2007).

In 2008, Mary Sue Terry helped start the organization fittingly named the “Farm Team”. The idea for the farm team had been discussed in the months leading up to the Virginia primary, when Hillary Clinton lost to Barack Obama (Schapiro, 2008). Several months later, with Democrat Hillary Clinton no longer a candidate and Republican Sarah Palin still in the running, 23 women traveled to Mary Sue Terry's farm in Critz to begin building a network that would become known as the Farm Team (Schapiro, 2008). The goal of the farm team was to reverse the underrepresentation of women in public
life. Schapiro (2008) wrote, “Like the PAC committed to electing females who favor abortion rights, the Farm Team envisions soliciting candidates, raising money and providing professional services as well as person-to-person advice.” Observed friend Sylvia Ellis, "They didn't just want to give them a fish but to teach them to fish.” Karen Schultz, an unsuccessful candidate for Virginia Senate last year, stated that "the idea is to create an entity where women could come to explore the possibilities." Schapiro (2008) concluded by stating, “Women make up half the state's population. And while their numbers, as local elective officials are growing, women - in both parties - hold just over 16 percent of Virginia's legislative seats.”

It is clear that Mary Sue Terry’s triumphant return to her home state, hometown, and home schools contained all the essential elements of the stage of “return” in Campbell’s (1949) hero’s journey. She gave a tremendous amount of her time, ideas, and money back to her community. Whether it was imparting her knowledge on University of Richmond students, consulting for Microsoft, restoring her farm, or developing the farm team, Terry has lived the selfless life of a hero. Mary Sue Terry proved that she had successfully completed Joseph Campbell’s monomythic stages, thereby cementing her status as a great Richmond hero.

Transformation of Mary Sue Terry

Perhaps one of the most essential elements of becoming a hero is the personal transformation that she must undergo. Virtually every hero transforms in some way, and later along the hero’s journey she transforms others in some similar fashion. Joseph Campbell (1988) put it best when he noted, “Heroism involves a transformation of human consciousness.” Personal transformations can be physical, mental, moral, spiritual, or emotional in nature (Allison & Smith, 2015). Mary Sue Terry underwent both mental and emotional transformations on her journey to becoming a hero. As mentioned earlier, Terry grew up in a small town in Virginia with a population of just 15 people. When Terry was young, she sold corn meal and she was fascinated by the water that powered the mill. This experience instilled in her “the concept of harnessing the power” (Baker, 1993) and marked the beginning of her mental transformation.
Her mentality changed from a small-town mindset to one with big ambitions and the hunger to fulfill them. From this point onward, Mary Sue Terry drew from this inspiration and used it in college to be elected class president, to become the first and only female attorney general in Virginia, and become a role model for countless women interested in politics. Mary Sue Terry arrived at Westhampton College at Richmond with the same fascination with “harnessing the power” (Baker, 1993). Despite not knowing anyone at the school, being relatively shy, and living in an upperclassmen dorm her freshman year, Terry harbored the desire to make a difference on campus and beyond (Baker, 1993). Emotionally, she transformed from a shy and timid girl into a focused, confident, strong-willed, and determined woman who was elected secretary and eventually president of Westhampton College by her fellow students.

How Mary Sue Terry Transformed Others

In addition to personally transforming, Mary Sue Terry also transformed others. As Attorney General of Virginia, Terry worked tirelessly to accomplish several noteworthy goals. She reduced the blood-alcohol level required to prove drunk driving; she gave police additional tools to prosecute drug dealers; she increased penalties for sexual assault; she made stalking a crime; she joined forces with the federal officials to prosecute Lyndon LaRouche; and she forced Ford to recall thousands of ambulances across the country. By making these changes, Terry saved thousands of lives and made our communities safer. In this sense, Terry has helped people transform physically, morally, and emotionally -- precisely how heroes are known to transform others (Allison & Smith, 2015).

Following her tenure as Attorney General, Terry ran unsuccessfully for the position of governor. After losing the race, her colleague Tom King remarked, “It’s too bad. She would have been a good governor. She’s very inclusive. She brings people together” (Baker, 1993). Terry was indeed excellent at unifying people, a central quality of the mythic hero (Campbell, 1949). Furthermore, as the only woman to be elected as Attorney General in the history of Virginia, Terry transformed young women by inspiring them to aim higher in life. Young men as well as women were transformed by Mary Sue, who gained her position in office through hard work, focus, and determination. She
set an example for all Americans and encouraged us all to live our dreams. Her friend stated, “No one can recall Terry not getting anything she really wanted.” (Baker, 1993). Being able to accomplish what one wants despite long odds is heroic indeed.

the great eight traits of heroes

In their book on the psychology of heroism, Allison and Goethals (2011) proposed the great eight traits of heroes. These eight traits are smart, strong, selfless, resilient, reliable, caring, charismatic, and inspiring. Mary Sue Terry possessed all of these great eight qualities. Certainly, she was smart, inspiring, strong, selfless, and caring. As Attorney General, Mary Sue Terry displayed the trait of caring on multiple occasions, as she had to care for the people of Virginia. She demonstrated this quality by making Virginia’s roads safer, giving law enforcement more tools to prosecute criminals, increasing penalties for sexual assault, protecting citizens from stalkers, and recalling dangerous vehicles from the roads.

Terry was, and is, exceedingly sharp. She graduated from Westhampton college, and attended law school at the University of Virginia. She showed great intelligence in becoming a successful lawyer and transformative politician. Terry was also strong. As a woman politician, Terry faced many difficulties that she would not have faced if she were a male politician. She was victim of the double bind, a condition in which women in leadership positions are seen as too masculine for a woman or to feminine to be an effective leader. She was also criticized for being a single woman at the time that she was running for the position of Governor in Virginia. With regard to the great eight trait of strong, it takes strength for a woman to take all of the unfair criticism directed toward her and persevere through it. Perhaps the most prominent of her traits is inspiration. By being the first female politician to hold a statewide position in Virginia, Mary Sue Terry has been an inspiration to all. Her life is ample proof that anyone coming from anywhere, even a town with 15 people in it, can accomplish heroic objectives.
Taxonomy of Heroes: Defining Mary Sue Terry

In addition to identifying the types of traits that make a hero, researchers have attempted to identify the many different subtypes of heroism. One popular taxonomy of heroes has been proposed by Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo (2011) with their situation-based taxonomy of heroes. Some of the subtypes of heroes in this taxonomy include the duty-bound physical risk heroes, religious figures, political and religious leaders, scientific heroes, good samaritans, odds beaters/underdogs, and whistleblowers. From this taxonomic structure of heroes, Mary Sue Terry can be classified as an underdog and odds beater. Terry was one of a select few women of her era to graduate from law school, and she was the only woman to be elected to a state-wide government position. In college she was also an underdog, yet she was successful. Research shows that we love underdogs because we can identify with the disadvantaged person, and rooting for underdogs maximizes our emotional payoff (Vandello, 2017). Mary Sue is beloved by the Richmond community because she was able to become the first female to hold a statewide government position, and then make the most of that opportunity by putting into place several transformative laws that made the world safer and stronger.

Another scientific taxonomy of heroism is Goethals and Allison’s (2012) social influence-based taxonomy. Several hero subtypes in this taxonomy include: trending, transitory, traditional and transforming. From this taxonomic perspective Mary Sue Terry is both a traditional hero and a transforming hero. A traditional hero is one who makes exceptional contributions over time, and a transforming hero is one who transforms society. Mary Sue Terry qualifies as a traditional hero because her public service and contributions to society have spanned several decades and have conformed to the classic hero’s journey in mythology. She also qualifies as a transforming hero because, as Attorney General of Virginia, she was able to change and enact several laws that shaped and molded society in positive and enduring ways.

As a very active member of Virginia’s government, Mary Sue Terry was able to contribute to the betterment of the society of Virginia. Hoyt (2014) has raised the idea that in the leadership literature there has been a recent shift in emphasis from the question, “Can women lead?” to the question, “Are women
better leaders?” Hoyt suggests that women leaders are more likely to improve standards of living, education, and health care; they are more likely to enjoy success in peace negotiations; they are more apt to reach across party lines and use democratic and participatory styles of leadership; they engage in transformational leadership behavior, follow ethical guidelines, and promote the welfare of women, children, and families; and they are more likely to engage in philanthropy (Hoyt, 2014). Mary Sue Terry embodied many of these qualities, including the use of democratic and participatory styles.

summary and conclusion

Gerard Way once said, “Heroes are ordinary people who make themselves extraordinary.” Mary Sue Terry was one such person. She came from a town that was “so small that our school taught drivers education and sex education in the same car” (Terry, 2016). But Terry overcame her small-town upbringing and achieved her larger than life goals. She had a successful college career, where she played basketball and was the class secretary and eventually class president. She then went on to study law and obtained an advanced degree from the University of Virginia. Even though these moments occurred early in her life, they all helped to develop her into the hero she is today.

Mary Sue Terry successfully traversed the stages of Joseph Campbell’s monomyth of the hero. Her departure stage was leaving her hometown for the intimidating Westhampton college. Her initiation stage included overcoming the barriers placed on women in politics and leadership, and dealing with the pernicious effects of the double bind. The return stage referred to her generous efforts to give back to Richmond and form the Farm Team in rural Virginia. Mary Sue Terry transformed herself, evolving heroically from a shy hometown girl to a determined and motivated politician. She transformed others in many meaningful ways. She displayed the great eight traits of heroes, especially the traits of smart, caring, selfless, inspiring, and strong. Terry can be classified as an underdog, and a political leader according to Franco Blau and Zimbardo’s (2011) situation-based taxonomy of heroes. All of these elements of her heroism combine to make Mary Sue Terry one of Richmond’s greatest heroes.
references


