March 9, 2007

Developing Leadership During Adolescence: The Experiences of University Presidents

Susan R. Madsen, Utah Valley University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/susan_madsen/124/
Developing Leadership During Adolescence: The Experiences of Women University Presidents

Dr. Susan R. Madsen
Associate Professor of Management
Leadership and Change Consultant/Researcher

Purpose
• Grants/funding
• 25 invited (mainly Research I institutions)
• 10 presidents interviewed

Phenomenological methodology
• 2-4 hours, transcribed
• Data analysis

Research Study

Personalities and Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a youth I was (or had)</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>Eager</th>
<th>Embracing the world</th>
<th>Ernest student</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Good self-esteem</th>
<th>Good student</th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
<th>High self-expectations</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Logical</th>
<th>Mentally prepared</th>
<th>Motivated</th>
<th>Obsidian</th>
<th>Optimistic</th>
<th>Outgoing</th>
<th>Persevering</th>
<th>Practical</th>
<th>Rational</th>
<th>Reflective</th>
<th>Resilient</th>
<th>Self-directed</th>
<th>Sensitive</th>
<th>Shy in undefined situations</th>
<th>Smart</th>
<th>Uncomfortable in the spotlight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adventurous activities</th>
<th>Future homemakers</th>
<th>Girl scouts/Brownies</th>
<th>Hanging out with friends</th>
<th>Hebrew school</th>
<th>Hiking</th>
<th>Honors society</th>
<th>Ice skating</th>
<th>Informal sports</th>
<th>International club</th>
<th>Latin club</th>
<th>Latin club</th>
<th>Marching band</th>
<th>Math club</th>
<th>Orchestra</th>
<th>Piano</th>
<th>Picnics</th>
<th>Physics club</th>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>Riding club</th>
<th>Running for office</th>
<th>School activities</th>
<th>Service projects</th>
<th>Sewing</th>
<th>Shopping</th>
<th>Skiing</th>
<th>Social groups</th>
<th>Sororities</th>
<th>Speaking contests</th>
<th>Student government</th>
<th>Water skiing</th>
<th>Yearbook editing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Youth Leadership Experiences

• Club leadership (president, vice president, or secretary)-9
• Student government-4
• Girls Scouts/Brownies-3
• Editor of the school paper-3
• Community service leadership-3
• Church youth leadership-3
• Sorority-2
• Children’s music director-1
• Future homemakers-1
• Band uniform director-1

Quotes
• I became the president of everything I joined. People saw me as strong and capable. I was very organized and worked hard. People want you involved if you open your mouth and talk about how things could be done better. For example, I went to the first Latin club meeting, and I saw that they were floundering. I gave them ideas about how to improve and ended up in leadership but the end of the meeting. In fact, I ended up being in pretty responsible positions and loved doing that.
• I absolutely adored the whole experience of being part of a team. It was a very enriching experience. The whole notion of sports, of excelling physically and being a part of a team was important to me.
• Sports are about a sense of team, of interchangeable parts. My leadership now is about building organizational capacity behind a vision. Our team is focused on building organizational capacity. I may not be as much about a team as much as it is about the way players adapt to one another to advance toward that larger goal of winning the game. This could have very well been an important part of my own evolution that began during my youth.
Influential Individuals

Role model, mentor, coach, advisor, supporter, sponsor, friend, example

- Parents (10)
- English teachers (7)
- Peers (5)
- Math teachers (4)
- Latin teachers (3)
- Relatives (3)
- Church teachers and neighbors (3)
- Family friends or nanny (2)
- Chemistry, biology, economics, Hebrew, history teachers (1 each)
- Camp counselors (1)
- Principal (1)

Quotes

- "Involvement in a lot of different activities and experiences during my youth helped me develop a number of characteristics or competencies that have continued to be helpful in my leadership roles today. These include dependability, responsibility, organization, motivating others, networking, leading change, people skills, viewing barriers as opportunities, learning from my mistakes, and understanding roles."

- "I ran for a visible office in our high school student government and lost. I did a lot of reflecting on what I might have done differently and why I didn’t have the support I thought I had. I learned early that the practice of studying your mistakes/failures is a very important learning experience. This has been an important part of my leadership development. Maybe some of it is actually from taking on responsibility that I don’t mean to take on and then analyzing failures and learning from them. I believe this is an important part of what defines me today. My failures may have been more useful in my growth and development than my successes."

Youth Employment

- Waitress (3)
- Retail (3)
- Instructors with supervision responsibilities—swim, ice skating, camp counselor (3)
- Secretary
- Political campaign worker
- Odd jobs and babysitting (most)

Quotes

- "Math teacher: "He made math come alive for me. He was a pretty significant influence in my life at that time. When I went to college my intention was to major in math. That is the kind of influence he had on me. He saw potential and he pushed and jostled me. He would ask me how to solve problems. He put me on the spot because he thought I could do it, not because he was trying to embarrass me. I always knew that."

- "English teacher: “She was an amazingly challenging teacher who really pulled out things that I think most of us never thought. We had lots of writing assignments and lots of challenges around things like vocabulary development. She wrote the most provocative thing in my yearbook: “No lesser lights for you…” It has stayed with me forever. She was really challenging me to be all I could be. She was very important in my life.”"

Story

"Ms. Wyman was our high school principal and also the English teacher. She was strong, powerful, and impressive. She was a force to be reckoned with. The day the Brown v. Ferguson ruling came out of the Supreme Court, I met her in the hallway. I had been at the school for play practice. She uncharacteristically looked troubled and upset. She said that the Supreme Court had just ruled, and the day would come when there would be blood in the hallways. She was so troubled. That was all she said. At first I thought she was a bigot, but she wasn’t. She understood the cultural clash that was coming and was ahead for schools in the south. She knew the impact that it was going to have. She was looking ahead with a kind of grief that it couldn’t happen some other way…that it had to come to force to make it happen. I was in a totally segregated school. Years later I understood things. I met a person of color at a professional meeting who asked if I knew a black individual in my small hometown. I did not. We then realized that I would have never have had a way to know her. The isolation of the two worlds was absolutely complete, and none of us noticed it."

Quotes

- "‘I had really close friends that became my base of support from which I operated. They were the sounding board to tell me what I was doing wrong. We were very open. We didn’t think too highly of ourselves and talked about everything. We would tell it like it was. It was so important that you have people who do that, to tell you when you are being silly.’"

- "‘I have learned something from almost everybody that I have interacted with, even as a youth. I watched what people did. When they did things really well I thought about what they did and why it worked. I pondered about whether there was something that I would incorporate and I could learn from that observation. If there is anything for me that was morphomatic, it is watching, thinking, and implementing.’"
Plans for College Majors

- Math (3)
- Chemistry (3)
- English (2)
- Science (2)
- Biology (1)
- Latin (1)
- Economics (1)

General Findings and Takeaways

- Perceived some future options and opportunities
- All enjoyed math, science, logic/patterns
- Knowing yourself (voice)
- Reflection
- Feedback
- Learning to learn
- Difficulties/challenges (family issues, illnesses, moves, hardships)