CRAFTING NEW HEROIC LEADERS
A STUDY IN MYTH, DRAMA, AND SEMIOTICS

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Statement of the Problem

Currently the literature outlines various methods of having or owning leadership but it does not outline a model of heroic leadership that is accessible to everyone. Our world needs to be able to perform heroic leadership and have heroic leaders in it. Heroic leadership is when we perform the drama of leadership in a way that is heroic in nature. This was the default model of leadership in ancient times. It was also the model of leadership that was born out of oral tradition and myth. Leadership was modeled after heroic individuals who performed great deeds. In addition this form of heroism was accessible to followers as they were promoted to aspire to the ideals of their heroic leaders. Other models of open, decentralized, or collective leadership has moved away from this valuable and viable method of leadership. The main communicative soul of leadership was based in heroism and heroic ideals. The current gap in literature is clear. There is no clear model that outlines how to perform heroic leadership easily or one that promotes the values and ideals of heroism in its dramatic and mythological form.

One might ask why is it important to have a dramatic method for performing heroic leadership. Aren’t the current models enough? Why do we need to craft new heroic leaders and why is drama and myth the main model that we should be using? Together we can create new heroic leaders, something that this world desperately needs. New heroic leaders can provide the practical rules for guidance in our world. They can become models for correct behavior and codify belief. New heroic leaders can become central epistemological keys that will help followers perform behavior in the world. Our
world needs heroic leaders, and this study allows for a method to construct new heroic leadership.

“Doing leadership entails competent communicative performance which, by influencing others, results in acceptable outcomes for the organization (transactional/task-oriented goal), and which maintains harmony within the team or community of practice (relational/people oriented goal) (Holmes, 2005, p. 32). Transactional behaviors relate to the actual problem that needs to be solved or the task that needs to be achieved. The relationally oriented behaviors concentrate on creating and maintaining relationships and creating a productive work atmosphere (Holmes, 2005).

Throughout the literature it is clear to see that western society has portrayed heroic leadership as a trait or item that is only accessible to an elite few. Leadership as it stands move us away from the human experience as performed drama or co-constructed narrative between leader and follower. We need to move leadership back to the human, and back to the methods that were tried and true throughout the ages, namely acting within the tenets of heroism. Heroic leadership is a narrative that is embedded in drama and everyday life. It is intrinsic to everyone from heroes, to leaders, to followers, to the everyday man. Leaders craft a story and perform it and lead followers to perform the story as well. Heroic leadership is when we take the mythological tenets of heroism and form an ideal method of leadership based on those tenets.

The myths of heroes provide the practical ideals and rules for guidance of everyday life. It expresses a codified belief system of being greater than oneself from oral tradition. Myths and stories of heroes were the main mechanism for expressing how
we should live. When someone had a question on whether a certain behavior was acceptable, they turned to the stories of their Heroes and how they lead in ages past. We need to move back to this method of working within myths of heroism to enact leadership, but we have to go beyond just individual stories. We need a meta analysis of the drama of heroism and how it can be applied to leadership to craft new narratives of heroic leadership action.

One of the gaps and problems that is found in the literature is that human drama has been taken out of leadership. The performance of leadership drama has been replaced by ideas of skills and traits.

Another gap is that the original leader from myth that the world used as model for behavior has lost favor in our modern world. The hero’s identity was to be the go to model of leadership. This was human leadership at its apex, individuals who performed great deeds, people who were to be emulated and used as models for behavior. The hero and individual has been devalued and models of open, decentralized, and collective leadership has moved us away from the human aspect of leadership. The Heroes and the myths of heroes were models for leadership that has worked for us for generations, but we have moved away from the communicative soul which embodied heroic practice.

Also, there is a gap in the literature on mythic/dramatic methods for us to perform heroic leadership. “Myth is a form of language, and language itself predisposes us to attempt to understand ourselves and our world by superimposing dialectics, dichotomies, or dualistic grids upon data that may in fact be entirely integrated” (Levi-Strauss, 1979, p. viii). Drama on the other hand gives us the method for us to enact and re-enact reliably
the various aspects of heroism and leadership in our lives. Myth and drama together can create new narratives that we can enact that others can use as models for their behavior.

Throughout history there have been many individuals who we consider to be great heroic leaders. By heroic leader I mean a charismatic great man or woman who is a model of action for an organization, a person who is the go to decision-maker that performs a heroic act that saves the day, or someone who is the shining beacon of hope that people use as a point of inspiration in their lives. President Barack Obama, Buddha, Steve Jobs, Oprah Winfrey, Robin Hood, Mother Teresa, Jesus, King Arthur…there are many heroic leaders from our history. All of these individuals could be seen as great heroic leaders to a group of people and yet we don’t always associate that they are performing heroic leadership. Nor do we understand how heroic leadership can be used to identify actions that they have made over the years. These individuals are far and few between in history. The world needs more people who can enact positive change and be role models for future generations. Heroism takes leadership out of the mundane and promotes virtues that better society. The world needs more people who are heroic leaders. Heroic leadership can craft these people that promote the creation of positive change in the world.

One of the problems facing the creation of new heroic leaders is that the idea of heroic leadership has fallen from grace in the wide stage of leadership practice and our culture. The idea that our leaders should act heroically with the best intentions of society in their minds has been replaced by other views of leadership (even though heroic leadership is one of the original forms of leadership that we know of). In fact, the idea of
heroic leadership, or performing the action of leadership in a way that is heroic in nature, is no longer a prominent model that individuals try to perform. The idea that one person should be the focal point and model of action has been replaced by theories of open, distributed, and collective leadership. Even decentralized leadership, or models where no leaders exist have pushed heroic leadership out of the public eye. Heroic leadership needs to become more accessible and this paper aims to show how we can create new heroic leaders. The human drama of heroic leadership needs to be exposed and the myth of heroic leadership needs to be embodied by society today.

In addition, many texts throughout the literature address heroic leadership as a concept, but don’t delve into the holistic codes and drama that constitute it. These two concepts on their own, Heroism and Leadership, are multifaceted, deep, cultural and full of historical meaning. There are many texts that directly define leadership and heroism by studying them in the lived-field of human practice in everyday life while other texts gently probe at the two discourses, formulating definitions subtly by comparing them to cultural norms. Others still search for the meaning of heroism and leadership by deconstructing symbolic representations only to reconstruct them to fit contextually within a certain ideology. While each text holds to its own view as to what heroism and leadership are, many contradict each other. A holistic analysis and approach that unifies heroic leadership as myth and drama thereby placing it within reach of the everyday human practice is needed.

Heroic leadership needs to be accessible if we want new heroic leaders. To make new heroic leaders, there needs to be a simple way to create new stories in today’s culture.
as well as promote a method for people to perform heroic leadership. By understanding
the myth (true stories) and elements of human drama of heroic leadership practice we can
begin to craft new heroic leaders who will shape the world positively. What I have found
is missing in heroic leadership discourse is a semiotic reduction of heroic leadership
theory and a codification of heroic leadership through the lens of drama which would
make it more accessible. Myth gives us the framework of meaning while drama places
the concepts in a lived world that is relatable. Myth and drama also brings heroic
leadership back to its origins in history. Heroic leadership as it stands today has lost its
roots and in this paper aims to re-integrate myth and drama into the modern discourse,
which then provides a new avenue to form craft heroic leaders in the world.
Purpose and Significance of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to show how heroism and leadership codes can be used in conjunction with myth and drama to craft new heroic leaders in society linguistically. This can be broken into three parts.

The first purpose is to outline the major symbolic representations of the hero, the leader, and heroic leadership from both mythology and discourse. This gives us a foundation of codes that allow us to define what it means to be a heroic leader.

The second purpose is to frame these signs and symbols of heroic leadership into the framework of Kenneth Burke’s Dramatistic Pentad. This gives us a real world contextual relationship to the codes that surround heroic leadership, making it accessible to humans.

The final purpose is to show how we may craft new myths of heroic leadership and how we can create new heroic leaders in everyday life through myth and drama.

Before we get to these, I outline the reasons that we accept myth as a basis for our understanding of heroic leadership as a context for what is to come next.

This study is significant in many ways. First and foremost, this study brings heroic leadership back to its roots of drama and myth. It takes heroic leadership out of the grasps of the elite and brings it to the masses. Recreating heroism and leadership as drama it allows everyone to get on board and become a hero and a leader. Also with this study we can see leaders in a new heroic light and understand many more dimensions to their character. This study allows us to create new heroic leaders through semiotic
association using the codes that we find in the discourses of heroism and leadership. This meaning is separate from the current meaning that is in the discourse of heroic leadership on its own and is strongly associated with the mythic and dramatic origin of heroes and leaders.

The information found in this study can help leaders by making them aware of accepted leadership and heroic behaviors. Also this study shows how leadership and heroism can be used as metaphorical tools that can be used to frame communication. This study is also significant in that it adds to the existing literature and the continued development of communication studies of leadership and heroism. It also deepens our understanding of the two discourses and exposes the mythic meaning structures that lay hidden within our culture. Also, this study creates a topological model which is a framework of human behavior, a model for performing heroic leadership.
Research Questions

This study has two main research questions:

1) What is the drama of heroic leadership? First I show our rationale for accepting myth as a basis of heroism and leadership, and then I reduce and codify what constitutes being a heroic leader from myth and discourse. This is set within Burke’s Dramatic framework to see how we as humans may embody heroic leadership.

2) How can we create new heroic leaders? By applying the codified drama of heroic leadership through Barthes’ mythological framework (the semiotic mythological association of concepts) in conjunction to the pentadic analysis above, I show how we may craft new myths heroic leaders and create new heroic leaders in everyday life.
Methodology

As this is a theoretical thesis, no one methodology will be sufficient to explore the discourses of heroic leadership, leadership and heroism completely. This thesis uses components of semiotics, dramatism, and mythic criticism. The pragmatic process of how the analysis is completed follows the following method: reading, analyzing, thinking, and writing. No one methodology filled my needs in examining the discourses of leadership and heroism. To answer my research questions I felt that a holistic approach that encompassed various disciplines would be the best way to show how we may craft new heroic leaders. I feel that it is the interplay between text, discourse, and drama that helps us understand our experiences with these multifaceted phenomena.

The overall structure and format of the thesis is as follows: First I examine the mythic nature of leadership in order to frame how we come to understand and accept leadership theories as truth, followed by a description of heroic leadership contrasted with post-heroic leadership discourse. This is then followed by a dramatic look into the literature surrounding leadership and heroism which is codified using semiotics into the framework of dramatism. Next comes a breakdown description and semiotic/dramatic reduction of heroic leadership, heroism, and leadership discourses. Then I examine how new myths can be created in the world using semiotics and outline examples that show how we may create new meaning and new heroic leaders using mythic criticism.

Kenneth Burke's dramatism and pentadic analysis allows for drama to be viewed in discourse. In this study I frame the act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose of both
leadership and heroism in order to create manageable signs that can be used in Claude Levi-Strauss’s structural linguistic framework and Roland Barthes’ mythic framework.

The five dramatic elements of a rhetorical artifact is the basis of dramatic analysis. The act describes the major actions that take place in a discourse. The agent is the person, or thing that performs the action. The agency is the means in which the agent performs the action. The scene is the rhetorical situation which includes the ground, the location, and all of the setting. Lastly the purpose is the why of the discourse, what the agent intends to accomplish by performing an act. (Foss, 1989, p. 339). Here through communication theory the mythic nature of leadership and heroism is revealed, and the possibilities of both discourses become apparent.

I have chosen Burke’s pentad as a framework for drama because it showcases the performative nature of communication. When we know the act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose of an act, we can then try to emulate it and learn to embody it. Other methods such as fantasy-theme analysis, role theory, and cluster analysis do not lend to a methodology that allows us to create a framework for performing lived action as easily as Burke’s pentadic framework.

Levi-Strauss and Rolland Barthes created a framework for superimposing one meaning structure upon another in order to create new meaning. Barthes explains that this process is one that humans use to create myth. In essence, after dramatizing the discourses into performative terms, I can then use semiotics to craft a new myth that explains how to perform heroic leadership behavior that is beyond the older “charismatic-leader” version of heroic leadership.
In the final interpretation stage I integrate leadership and heroism together in order to form the concept of heroic leadership in a new way, where we can apply meaning to action and forge new heroic leaders. Here I promote how rhetors can formulate their own myths of heroic leadership based off the framework outlined in this thesis and show examples of the myth of heroic leadership in action.
Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations to this study. First, I will not be able to analyze the entire discourses of leadership and heroism. Instead I will pick and choose a wide sample of texts that relate to leadership and heroism in order to portray as best I can the prominent knowledge concerning these two discourses.

This study also explores the concept of heroic leadership while virtually ignoring the concept of leadership heroism. I feel that heroic leadership (or heroism acting upon leadership) is a more practical concept to elaborate on rather than leadership-heroism (or leadership acting upon heroism). The modern terminology denoting heroism relates to the act of doing something above or beyond oneself, or performing brave and courageous action. The pre-modern concept of the heroism found in oral tradition and the archetype of the hero within the universal unconscious is not generally associated with a tangible lived body, instead the hero is a fleeting shadow today of its epic past. Leadership on the other hand is alive and well, a modern concept that organizations thrive upon. Everyone is looking for leaders and leadership skills, and things that expand leadership practice. I feel that the concept of the heroic leadership is much more interesting in terms of practical usage in organizational settings, while the leadership-heroism would be useful mostly as an exercise in semiotic association. Also this study does not examine the nature that media plays in the framing of heroic leadership.

The critical school of discourse analysis looks at the power dynamics of our socially constructed world. This study does not explore the critical power dynamics,
political implications, or gender inequalities of the individual discourses, nor the socio-historical context that envelopes the discourses. The concepts as semiotic artifacts that constitute discourse is what I am aiming to expose, re-frame within communication theory, and raise questions to their pragmatic use within organizational systems. The myth and creation of myth is what I am addressing. The power dynamics and ramifications and speculation (while briefly touched upon here) are for another study to critically study and elaborate upon.

Also, I would like to take a moment to address the gender pronouns and masculine tone that is prominent through this thesis. This thesis is not gender neutral. The pronouns used throughout this thesis are in the masculine form. Traditionally the archetype of the Hero in mythology and in literature has been used in the masculine form. Western tradition has promoted masculine language when speaking of leader. I find this is because most of the individuals in positions of leadership have mostly been males. This bias towards the masculine is an important distinction of the literature that forms the basis of theory that this thesis examines.

I have chosen to keep the masculine tone, but while I refer to Hero’s and Leaders as “he” or “him” throughout this document, the concepts of heroism and leadership are open and accessible to both genders. Heroic leadership is open and accessible to everyone, it is not exclusionary based on gender. In this thesis, I do write in the masculine when describing hero’s and leaders, but this is a conscious choice. Removing gender pronouns creates a lack of authenticity towards the discourses in their historical context. With this said though, any use of the masculine can be easily changed to the
feminine. Hero can be heroine, he can be she, etc. In today’s modern age, heroic leadership should and is accessible by everyone.
Overview of the Study

Chapter One outlines how myth as our rationale for accepting heroes and leaders. Chapter Two explores our understanding of the current discourse of heroic leadership. Chapter Three contains a semiotic breakdown and dramatistic analysis of heroism and leadership. Chapter Four shows how we can craft new heroic leaders linguistically using myth.

In essence, this study is an analysis that pulls from various methodologies to paint a portrait of what heroic leadership can be, using various accepted ideas in order to construct a structuralist reduction blocked into Burkian dramaturgic terminology. This structuralist reduction is then used to expose the mythic nature of the discourses by applying Barthes’ semiotic mythic analysis, which then in turn allows us to craft new heroic leaders.
Chapter 1: Myth as our rational for accepting heroes and leaders

Stories of heroes have been passed down in oral tradition since time immemorial. These were the great people who changed the course of history, the individuals who made a difference in the world. The idea of the heroic leader was found in myth and legend and told to countless generations. Stories were used as guidelines for human behavior in many societies. The myths of heroes “fulfilled an indispensable function – it expressed, enhanced, and codified belief, safeguarding morality by providing practical rules for the guidance of individuals” (Danesi & Perron, 1999, p. 257).

When someone had a question whether a certain behavior was acceptable by society, they turned to the elders and the stories of the great people in their society. The stories of the hero created a model for right and wrong, good and bad, how to live and how to die. The heroes of ancient times embodied the culture that they lived in as the heroic leaders of today’s organizations embody the culture that they are in. These myths helped shape society and culture. The heroic leader gains its power from the stories passed down about them in the culture, the actions they do and how they are perceived by others. The heroic leader gains his power from Myth of the heroic leader that has been passed down generation to generation. Today, the charismatic hero-Myth has been codified, written down, and passed along in written form. Part of the power of the heroic leader is derived by the functional form of Myth. We accept the heroic leader not just by his current actions, but also by his ability to cohere to our narrative rationale of truth and his correspondence to the cultural accepted mythic narrative of the hero and leader passed
down from generation to generation. Without the myth of the hero or the myth of the leader, the heroic leader would not exist.

According to Stephen Littlejohn and Karen Foss (2007), myths are neither literally true nor false. They speak to us because they articulate universal themes. “Speaking to universal and cultural beliefs, values, and experiences, myths are articulated in dreams and cultural artifacts and are actualized in rituals” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007). I will also distinguish myths from fables just as Eliade (1963, p. 8) has. Myths are “true stories” and fables or tales, “false stories.” Durkheim relates to the narrative reasoning of myth as well:

“To Durkheim, Nature was a model of regularity and thus predictable and ordinary. He concluded that myths arose as emotional responses to social existence, thus constituting a narrative moral code and a system of historical reasoning. Myths and the rituals stemming from them sustain and renew moral systems, keeping them from being forgotten, and they bind people socially…work in narratology has revealed, above all else, that the narrative structure of myths provides the categories of the plot grammars that underlie all the stories we tell, from the ancient tragedies to the detective stories of today” (Danesi & Perron, p. 257).

In this study, I will look at myth as a “true history” or sacred story that helps us understand the nature of our experiences in the world. Myths are the big, overarching narratives that help us interpret human experience. “‘Myth’ means a ‘true story’ and, beyond that, a story that is a most precious possession because it is sacred, exemplary, significant” (Eliade, 1963, p. 1). Originally the word myth comes from the Greek word “mythos” which means “word,” “speech,” “tale of the gods.” In its initial usage, a myth is a narrative “in which the characters are gods, heroes, [heroines,] and mystical beings, the plot revolves around the origin of things or around dramatic human events, and the
setting is a metaphysical world juxtaposed against the real world” (Danesi & Perron, p. 259). Myth is a knowledge system that helps us explain our experiences. The knowledge system and the search for truth is found in the narrative structure of myth. Individuals can find truth in these narratives because they can relate their own life to the situations presented in the narrative. Today the term myth has come to be used to denote a false story in contemporary society. The term ‘mythos’ in turn has come to indicate “what cannot really exist” (Eliade, 1963, p. 2). While this connotative meaning of the word myth is still in use today, it is not in this sense of the word that we come to understand what true “myth” is.

There are two types of myths, first are universal and the second are cultural. Universal myths speak to all people of all cultures by looking at the basics of human experience. These myths transcend culture and history because their themes refer to things everyone experiences such as birth, death, growth to adulthood, and the search for meaning (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007). Brown (1991) explains that human beings have a heterogeneous set of human universals, and that while anthropologists may be skeptics about their very existence, there seems to be quite a bit of evidence towards this claim. To Brown, humans have more similarities than differences, and to me these similarities speak to the realm of the universal myth. Nineteenth-century mythology found what are called “motifs,” or reoccurring themes that are found in the stories across humankind. Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) called these themes “primordial thoughts.” In 1909, Hubert Mauss described them as universal beliefs and doctrines or “categories of the imagination” (Papadopoulous, 2006, p. 82). The psychologist Carl Jung categorized
some of these universal manifestations of myth into archetypes: “types of consciousness, that is, characteristic orientations assumed by the ego in establishing and discriminating an individual's inner and outer reality” (Papadopoulos, 2006, p. 131). To Jung, humans embody these archetypes at one point or another, and that as we mature we enact them. Jung wrote in his essay ‘Mind and earth’: “Archetypes are systems of readiness for action, and at the same time images and emotions.” (Papadopoulos, 2006, p. 84). “These archetypes are usually expressed through cultural artifacts such as films, dreams, speeches, music, and art” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007).

Carl Jung outlined five main psychological archetypes: The self, the shadow, the anima, the animus, and the persona. These main archetypes take on various forms in mythology. These recurring archetypal images could be found in various cultures on a broad scale. The Child, The Hero, The Great Mother, The Trixter, The Warrior; these are just a few of the archetypes that he found shared across cultures. Heroes and heroines are referred to as characters that displace courage, self-sacrifice, and heroism. They were moral characters that could be found in myths across the globe. (Edinger, & Jung, 1992)

Cultural myths are specific to a time and place and serve to conserve meaning within a culture. They are strategically crafted to pass down a pragmatic ideology from one generation to another. “Often the term ‘ideology’ is seen as referring simply to a system of ideas and beliefs. However, it is closely tied to the concept of power and the definition given by Anthony Giddens is probably the easiest to understand. Giddens defines ideology as ‘shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups’” (Giddens, 1997, 583). According to Hart (Jasinski, 2001) there are
various common forms of myth prevalent in most societies. First there are the cosmological stories that explain the origins of man, the nature of reality, and what mankind’s ancestors are like. Societal myths teach humans the proper way to live. “A myth’s serviceability is judged by its evocative potential, its capacity to impress on the listener the “truth” of an event, not by its factuality” (Jasinski, 2001, p. 242). Identity myths explain the difference between various cultural groups. Eschatological myths help humans understand what will happen in the future. They serve to show what lies in store for individuals in the short and long run.

T.O. Beidelman (Burke, 2005, p. 3) suggests that social phenomena require multiple modes of interpretation. “No single theoretical system entirely explains any society. A resourceful anthropologist employs different, even seemingly contradictory, analytical means to comprehended any manifest society and culture.” To understand the power of myth, we have to be open to multiple approaches. It is the pursuit of the socially constructed truth we are after.

The various types of myths, whether universal or cultural in nature, have various mythological functions in common: psychological, ideological, cosmogonic-teleological, and cosmological. (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007). The psychological function of myth deals with issues of identity formation and helps show how humans develop from birth to death. They show how life evolves and what one can expect in the future.

The sociological function of myth is concerned with “connecting and adjusting the individual to [a] culture and articulating a culture’s identity. As social cement, myths help create or confirm a culture’s collective identity while addressing issues related to the
individual such as socially sanctioned and unsanctioned behavior” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007). These myths provide lessons for individual members of the culture on what is right and wrong behavior and attune individuals towards acting in a certain way. The ideological function of myth sanctions a particular worldview and refers to myths that rationalize certain behaviors. It establishes status and power dynamics within cultures as normal and also “mask awareness of their status as myth—that is, they are articulated as natural or commonsensical” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007). The cosmogonic-teleological function of myth explains how a group came to be and the origins of the group in the larger sense of the world. It also explains where the group is going, pointing to the inevitable destiny that the group will reach. The cosmological function speaks to the divine nature of human beings and “connects the individual with an awareness of the ineffable, the eternal, or the immortal” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007).

In ancient culture, myth provides an invaluable function in that it codifies belief (Eliade, 1963, p. 20). It gives humans practical rules of the way things have always been, the way things are, and the way things will be. Myth reinforces morality and gives humans a practical guide of how to live life. Myth was the sacred history of the people, handed down in oral tradition from one generation to another. Myth brought the ancestors and the gods into the lifeworld of the people in the current day. “Oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human lifeworld, assimilating the alien, objective world to the more immediate, familiar interaction of human beings” (Ong, 1991, p. 42). In modern culture, what then is the function of myth?
Levi-Strauss (1979) proposed this difficult question as well as asking where does mythology end and where does history start? If myths are stories of what has happened, is happening, and will happen, how can one come to know what is and isn’t? Myth does not start or end, instead it is pedagogical in nature. “Mythology teaches you what’s behind literature and the arts, it teaches you about your own life” (Campbell, 2011, p. 14). Myth is a closed system with reoccurring themes, while history is an open system that is constantly under change. “Mythology is static, we find the same mythical elements combined over and over again…The open character of history is secured by the innumerable ways according to which mythical cells, or explanatory cells which were originally mythical, can be arranged or rearranged” (Levi-Strauss, 1979, p. 40). Levi-Strauss is talking about mythemes here, structural story elements that can be “bundled” together or reassembled but are found in myths far and wide. “Myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred into the World. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really establishes the World and makes it what it is today” (Eliade, 1963, p. 6). The question of where mythology ends and history begins is a false question;

“What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality…what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality…myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they were once made. The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences” (Barthes, 1972, p. 142).

Myth takes reality and purifies it. Barthes explains that Myth is depoliticized speech that illuminates the way the world works. It uses language that has been robbed
of meaning by superimposing secondary semiotic meaning structures above it. Myth makes things “innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact” (Barthes, 1972, p. 143). To Barthes, “a myth is a form of discourse that tries to make cultural norms appear as facts of nature” (Palmer, 2007, p. 56).

Myth as narrative can be viewed as an organic metaphor for life. Myth as narrative is open to multiple interpretations, but when storytelling heroic leaders in culture we find that “people do not just tell stories: they tell stories to ‘enact’ an account of themselves and their community. Stories also shape the course and meaning of human organization” (Boje, 1995, p.1001).

Mythic material can be found in one of two ways. First we may find disconnected stories that are put one after another without any clear relationship between them. Secondly we can find “mythological stories, all divided into very coherent mythological stories, all divided into chapters following each other in quite a logical order” (Levi-Strauss, 1979, p. 34). An artifact is mythic in nature if it fulfills one of the five functions of myth stated above. To Barthes, the ideological function of myth is paramount.

Barthes explains that to make an artifact mythic one must rob the denotative meaning associated with a sign, empty it of its meaning, alienate it from its roots and then recreate meaning in such a way that naturalizes the sign. Barthes uses the example of a black soldier saluting. This signifier signifies fidelity to France and love of one’s country. When one looks at the sign, one would see a faithful black soldier. Myth then applies a secondary meaning system on top of this sign of the faithful black soldier. The soldier
would be considered a signifier in a meta-semiotic system in which its signified would be that France is a great empire where all “her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag” (Palmer, 2007, p. 58). Under this mythic system we see the picture of the faithful black soldier not of what it is, but instead as an image representing the naturalized ideology of colonialism and imperialism. The sign has been robbed of its signified and instead new meaning has been attached. The artifact, so innocent in its presentation now represents a strict view of reality, of how things were, how things are, and how things will come to be.

The power of myth not only stems from its ability to naturalize speech and devalue signs, but from its narrative nature. A good starting definition of narrative is Lewis Hinchman’s (1997, p. xvi) definition: “Narratives (stories) in human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people’s experience in it.” In narratives we see forms of “social action, with meanings and motives attached, as well as the way people reveal aspects of their identity and make sense of their social situations and histories” (Hackman, 2009, p. 221). Narratives allow us to have multiple simultaneous realities within discourse. There are many items that can be considered for narrative textual analysis. Walter Fisher (1985, p. 347) explains that “there is no genre, including technical communication, that is not an episode in the story of life (a part of the ‘conversation’) and is not itself constituted by logos and mythos…technical discourse is imbued with myth and metaphor, and aesthetic discourse has cognitive capacity and import.” In human sciences, everything can be a
narrative and narrative is the primary functional way that human beings understand reality. In this narrative paradigm, the world has many stories that we may choose from.

We choose which stories to believe in based on narrative rationality. Narrative rationality is broken into two separate processes. First is narrative probability, or whether the formal features of the story cohere and make sense. To Fisher this is the question of whether a story “hangs together” and is free of contradictions. Secondly there is the concept of narrative fidelity which concerns itself with truth. Here the question is if the story fits into the worldview of the reader and if there are good reasons for believing a story is true.

“Any individuated form of human communication may constitute a ‘good reason’ if it is taken as a ‘warrant for accepting or adhering to the advice fostered’ by that communication. To weigh the values, one considers questions of fact, relevance, consequence, consistency, and transcendent issue” (Fisher, 1985, p. 350). Here the story has to fit into the ontological, epistemological, axiological assumptions about the way the world works. Narrative probability and narrative fidelity together create Fisher’s narrative rationality, or “practical wisdom.”

Heroism is engrained in myth and mythic material. The hero itself is a mythological archetype that is portrayed across cultures. “Whether the hero be ridiculous or sublime, Greek or barbarian, exile or Jew, his journey varies little in essential plan” (Campbell, 1968, p. 38). It is agreed upon within the discourse that heroism and heroes are inherently mythic in nature. The functions of myth are plain to see in the discourse of heroes. I feel it is important to focus on how leadership is mythic.
There are many varied definitions about what “leadership” truly is. According to Michael Useem, leadership signifies the act of making a difference (Hackman, 2009, p. 5). Peter Northouse defines leadership as a “process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2010, p. 14) Peter Block presents the case that leadership is “about intention, convening, valuating relatedness, and presenting choices” and that a leader is a “citizen willing to do those things that have the capacity to initiate something new into the world…the leader as one who creates experiences for others – experiences that in themselves are examples of our desired future” (p. 85). There are hundreds if not thousands of definitions of what “leadership” is, most of which have a direct essentialist argument. These theories tell us that leadership is something outside of ourselves, something to be studied. It is a phenomena that has been dissected and analyzed to the nth degree. We no longer have the question of what is “leadership,” we have countless definitions. Anyone can turn to a leadership guru or a popular leadership blog to find one that is suitable. The question instead is one that is tied to the living world of homo-dramatis. It is not enough to know a definition of leadership, or understand a theory of leadership. To truly know and understand what leadership is one has to become a leader. The question really is: How can I do leadership?

This question opens up new opportunities for individuals, giving growth for them to become empowered. It creates room for one’s life to develop and grow. If we ask how we can become leaders, we open new possibilities for ourselves and those we will
lead. It is a question that is not descriptive but adaptive, one that is created by every action and situation we encounter. Where does one start? How do we enact leadership?

To me, the answer lies within the leadership texts and theories that explain what “leadership” is. When we view these texts as narratives that show us how to do leadership, they cease to become lifeless descriptive artifacts. Instead they become living representations of leadership. They instantly become transformed into myth.

Theories about leadership not only describe what is out there in the world as phenomena, but also teach how human beings should act in future encounters. While the original intention of many studies may have been to examine and describe something “out there” in the world, they have been used in various books and literature in order to teach individuals how “leadership is done.” One must only go to a bookstore or Amazon.com and search “leadership” in order to see the plethora of material available that instruct individuals how to do leadership, much of which is based on the academic theories and studies that have been done. In doing so, leadership has become institutionalized and habitualized. “All human activity is subject to habitualization. Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can be then reproduced with an economy of effort which, ipso facto, is apprehended by its performer as part of that pattern. Habitualization further implies that the action in question may be performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 53).

Leadership theory has been systematically organized and taught across the world. These theories are based on narratives that are describing acceptable, desirable, and
strategically successful behavior that leads to organizational achievements. Theories are stories that not only describe this behavior but prescribe it as “the way leaders are.” Institutionalization occurs whenever there is reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 54). This habitualization of leadership has created cookie cutter definitions of what a leader is, or how a leader should act. While they provide direction for individuals who are trying to be leaders, if these individuals are not careful and only adhere to one narrative, they can become uni-dimensional. The methods in these theories generally are aimed to create predictable communication interactions that allow for individuals and groups to achieve common goals. This makes leadership a transactional communicative process that we can learn to manipulate and shape in the ways we see fit. The work itself is lost in the leadership process, instead the act of leading and learning how to lead in the most effective manner supersedes the work itself. Part of the myth of leadership is that one must only act in the way that a leadership theory prescribes and one becomes a successful leader. The theories provide a “stable background in which human activity may proceed with a minimum of decision-making...in other words, the background of habitualized activity opens up a foreground for deliberation and innovation” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 53). When individuals follow the guidelines of behavior proposed in a leadership theory they reinforce the behavior as accepted leadership practice. This behavior in turn is studied, and written about for future generations to consume. Leadership theory feeds upon itself, each successful interaction can be attributed to adhering to the virtues of the theory while every failure can be attributed to a lack of an individual’s ability to enact
leadership correctly. Failures to enact leadership can be attributed to many scapegoats.

Each act of leadership that falls within the boundaries of the accepted socially
constructed meta-narrative and bolsters the view that leadership is an object that can be
learned, performed, and is something outside of ourselves. The acts themselves are self-
effecting narratives; they articulate leadership as a natural process. In doing so they
fulfill the ideological function of myth, where we “rationalize a particular worldview or
sanction particular behaviors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 57).

The ideological function of myth is internalized through narrative rationality; a
two-part system that Walter R. Fisher advocates for “determining whether or not one
should accept a story, whether or not a story is indeed trustworthy and reliable as a guide
to belief and action” (Fisher, p. 349). The first part, narrative fidelity, concerns itself
with the “truth qualities” of the story and how the story adheres to good logic. To test
the values one “considers questions of fact, relevance, consequence, consistency, and
transcendent issue” (Fisher, p. 350). The story must pass standards of informal and
formal logic. The academically treated and accepted theories about leadership pass this
test flawlessly. Each have been meticulously created and cast in a way that is attentive to
fact and definition and have been tested in various dimensions. Fisher explains that this
is the “soundness of its reasoning and the value of its values” (Fisher, p. 349). The story
must present good reasons for us to “accept and adhere to the advice fostered” (Fisher, p.
350). The second part is narrative probability which refers to “the formal features of a
story conceived as a discrete sequence of thought and/or action in life or literature (any
recorded or written form of discourse; i.e., it concerns the question of whether or not a
story coheres or ‘hangs together,’ whether or not the story is free of contradictions” (Fisher, p. 349).

“A narrative is a text that is constructed to describe a sequence of events or actions that are felt to be logically connected to each other or causally intertwined in some way” (Danesi, p. 249). Narratives have three structural features, plot, character, and setting. The plot is what the narrative is about. “Character refers to the embodiment of human personality features in the people who are the perpetrators and/or participants in the plot” (Danesi, p. 250). The Setting is where and when the plot takes place. This narrative structure is at the heart of narrative theory. In narrative theory, stories help us make sense of our loves and the lives of those around us. “The act of telling [stories] is a process of interpretation where the teller and listener collaborate in sense making” (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008, p. 242). Narrative helps us organize life into more manageable structures. Narrative structure are “the same kinds of thematic units, plot lines, character types, etc. The study of this structure in ancient myths comes under the semiotic rubric of mythology, and the general study of storytelling under that of narratology” (Danesi, p. 249). Meaning is drawn from a text when an individual weaves their own ontological, epistemological, and axiological knowledge with the text. This creates an intertextual scenario, where meaning is personal. Each leadership theory is understood in the context of the lifeworld of the individual who is examining it.

Leadership theories have been used to help individuals develop themselves in the workplace. “It is the capacity to develop and improve their skills that distinguishes leaders from their followers” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 26). The theories allow for personal
development by giving aspiring leaders material to help change their own perceptions and behavior. The theories fulfill the psychological function of myth, helping an individual form their own identity. They provide access to become part of the story and graduate from a non-entity to that of a leader. The theories allow for those who are dedicated enough to transition from one state of being to the next.

The theories also acclimate aspiring leaders to the climate of leadership. They articulate the culture of leadership and teach what is expected if one is to be seen as a leader. They teach the deeper dimensions about communication interactions and the epistemological assumptions found within. Each leadership theory proposes a very concrete ideology of what a leader is. The ideology shares its own view on the nature of reality and truth, the nature of time, the nature of space, the nature of human nature, the nature of human activity, and the nature of human relationships” (Scheien, p. 138). Theories propose a cross-section of leadership, a single view on one aspect of leadership identity. By defining a leader’s identity and teaching individuals how to perform leadership the theories fulfill the sociological function of myth. They become narratives that show distinct views of reality and how one can fit within it. This social reality has its own sanctioned and unsanctioned behavior. Leadership theories teach individuals how to become leaders. They create and confirm leadership culture and express an axiology of leadership.

The cosmogonic-teleological function of myth explains how a group came to be and the origins of the group in the larger sense of the world. It also explains where the group is going, pointing to the inevitable destiny that the group will reach. The
cosmological function speaks to the divine nature of human beings and “connects the individual with an awareness of the ineffable, the eternal, or the immortal” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Myth provides a solid foundation for human acceptance of the hero and the leader as acceptable role models for human action. Our narrative based rationale lends to accepting the various myth, and when we view leadership through the lens of myth it opens up many more possibilities for intertwining it with the discourse of heroism.
Chapter 2: Heroic Leadership, Post Heroic Leadership and Followership

Heroic leadership on its own falls into the realm of charismatic, personal and individualized leadership. In order to reform the idea into a broader holistic term that may be performed by individuals and groups, we must dissect the concepts separately. The discourses of heroism and leadership contain a myriad of definitions and myths (true stories) that explain how people in the past have performed. They also define the character of the hero and the leader. Before we can re-define heroic leadership to include new meaning, we have to first understand how traditionally we perform heroism on its own, and leadership on its own. This is where Kenneth Burke’s dramatic pentad helps us.

Burke’s pentad, as a framework for meaning, allows us to frame the two discourses in a way that points us towards embodied human action. The discourses on their own can be considered mythic narrative. To bring meaning and life to the constructs and to allow various groups to perform the discourses, we have to dramatize it into the world of human action. Outlining the act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose of Heroism and leadership allows us to frame the concepts very concretely in a way that can be applied to the drama of the moment, instead of the past. The pentad allows for us to create a divergence from myth and story and see how we can perform the various aspects of leadership and heroism today.

No item of the pentad truly exists on its own without a connection to the other parts. To explore the drama of leadership and the drama of heroism, I feel that jumping
from one part of the pentad to another fluidly and exploring the relationships between items lends to a better understanding of the concepts. For example, I move from the act to the agent, and back to the act of leadership instead of just focusing on the act. Many of the theories exist in a liminal space between items in the pentad, soliciting two or more dramatic definitions within the pentad. It is important to examine them fluidly as they come up and explore their relationship on a case by case basis.

Leadership and heroism are abstract concepts that are especially high in connotative content. There are numerous theories and codes that lend to our understanding of these phenomena. This chapter catalogues many of the leading theories about leadership and heroism. Burke’s dramatic pentad is especially useful in understanding how these two discourses function. In this chapter my aim is to analyze how various theories portray the act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose of leadership and heroism.

The question arises: What is a leader? Who is a leader? What is a leader’s role in society?

“Since the 1940’s there has been an enormous outpouring of writing on leadership. Yet, there is little consensus on what counts as leadership, whether it can be taught, or even how effective it might be… leadership ‘research’ has frequently been at best fragmented and at worst trivial, too often informed by the rather superficial ideas of management and academic consultants keen to peddle the latest, pre-packaged list of essential qualities deemed necessary for individual leaders and as the prescribed solution to all leadership dilemmas” (Collinson, 2005, p. 5).

From a grammatical point of view, a leader (noun) denotes a person who does “leading” (adjective), “leads” (verb) things, or performs “leadership” (noun). The
meaning behind the word leader is indeed a fragmented one. Each grammatical case
brings a new dimension on how we can understand a leader.

A “leader” (noun) is a person that “leads” (verb). The verb to “lead” brings forth
the dimension of first-ness or being at the front. To lead when used with an object is to
conduct, induce, guide, bring and direct behavior. On its own, the verb to “lead” brings
the same connotations of guiding human action, being in primary position, and of being
first. A leader knows the culturally acceptable codes of behavior and action and is able to
oversee the execution of action within the ideological constraints set forth by the codes.
A “leader” is also the guiding head, the director, the person at the front of a group. The
adjective “leading” has meaning in line with the noun “leader”; they denote that a leader
must be either the principle chief, or the director/guide of behavior in an organizational
group. The noun “leadership” points to the position of a leader, their ability to lead, and
the very act of giving direction and guidance (Dictionary.com, 2001). If we take these
definitions and combine them we come to a preliminary starting point to define a leader:

A leader is:

A primary positioned person who,
conducts and evokes action,
is the compendium for proper behavior within a set culture,
gives direction and guidance on how to execute action and manage behavior
within the cultures ideological constraints.

From a grammatical point of view, this definition seems satisfactory. A leader is
the first person that people go to to find guidance. Leaders have the institutional
knowledge on what constitutes proper action in the world. Leaders direct others how to perform these actions and are able to manage behavior. A leader is the catalyst for action, either through him/herself or through others. Action defines a leader, and a leader communicates action. It would seem then that a leader is an agent for action and an instructor for proper action.

The charismatic leader is the all-knowing prophet, the superstar CEO who saves the company or the superhero who is beloved all. These individuals are the rock stars of leadership, those who we see as the great people who lead by example. The “great man” conception of the person who saves the day is our starting point for mapping out what heroic leadership is.

Max Weber explores charismatic leadership through a sociological leader-follower relationship oriented approach. According to Weber, “a leader retains charismatic status as long as he or she is seen as charismatic. A charismatic leader must periodically demonstrate his or her exceptional personal gifts in order to maintain power over followers” (Hackman, 125). There are five key components to the charismatic leader. First the leader must have extraordinary talents that border on supernatural. Second, there must be a crisis or unstable situation. Third, the leader must have a radical vision on how to address the crisis with an innovative solution. Fourth, the leader must have followers who believe they are linked to the leader because of his or her extraordinary supernatural powers. Finally, the charismatic leader has to validate the extraordinary talents and powers they have by exercising their talents successfully in front of followers (Hackman, p. 125).
Others have tried to define and quantify charismatic leadership as a set of behaviors that leaders exhibit. The behavioral approach proposes a set of conclusions about charismatic leaders. First charismatic leaders “have strong power needs, display high self-confidence, demonstrate competence, serve as role models, communicate high expectations, engage in effective argumentation, and create transcendent goals…[they] serve as targets for follower hopes, frustrations, and fears…[and] also create a sense of excitement and adventure. While charismatics lead groups toward new visions, they build their appeals to followers on widely shared beliefs, values, and goals” (Hackman, 126). Also, charismatic leaders generally show up in highly stressful situations.

The attribution approach to charismatic leadership explains that the charismatic leader is created within the perception of their followers. There are five behaviors that encourage followers to see a leader as a charismatic one. First the leader must possess a vision that is unique and yet attainable. Also, the leader must act in an unconventional and counter-normative manner. Third the leader must demonstrate personal commitment and take risks. Fourth, the leader must demonstrate confidence and expertise. Lastly, the leader must demonstrate personal power. (Hackman, p. 126). The leader is the very center of things and has a significant impact on the events in an organization. These leaders are visionaries and agents of influence and inspiration.

Heroic leadership is also tied deeply with transformational leadership. Transformation leadership is based on charisma, individualized consideration, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation. According to James Kendrick (Kendrick, 2011, p. 14), transformational leadership involves four factors. First is idealized influence
based on charisma. A leader must build trust and respect with their followers. The foundation of this style of leadership is the bond between leaders and followers. Second is inspirational motivation, the leader provides innovative ways of seeing the world and viewing situations. They promote discussion, facilitate learning problem solving skills and teach decisive decision making. Third comes intellectual stimulation, where the leader challenges the followers to question their assumptions and be creative. High expectations are communicated and the use of symbols and metaphors enhance interactions. Lastly there is individual consideration where the leader is the coach and wise person who is there to advise on the correct course of action for followers. This creates the drive for shared goals and shared vision.

Transformational leadership is aimed at creating changes in individuals and organizational systems. Its main aim is to make followers become leaders and embody the idealized practices of transformational leadership. Followers are meant to be transformed into leaders themselves and embody the characteristics and mentality they are taught from. “The aim of this action-based leadership involve(s) a fundamental transformation or rethinking of structures, processes values and ideas for something better. This involve(s) a major paradigm shift and metanoic thinking” (Bamford-Wade & Moss, 2010, p. 18). Tom Peters and Robert Waterman described transformational leaders as “creative, interactive, visionary, empowering, and passionate. Furthermore, since transformational leadership can convert followers into leaders themselves, these characteristics are often filtered through the transformed groups and organizations” (Hackman, 2009, p. 105).
Heroic leadership has been described in quite a few ways across the board. William A. Cohen considers it an outcome of leadership in battle or warzone situations. Leaders in combat zones are successful if they follow a few guiding laws. Cohen suggests that when an individual embodies and actively performs in ways that adhere to the laws, they are then enacting heroic leadership. To be a heroic leader one must “maintain absolute integrity, know your stuff, declare your expectations, show uncommon commitment, expect positive results, take care of your people, put duty before self, [and] get out in front” (Cohen, 2011, p. 10).

Integrity is the “adherence to a set of values that incorporate honesty and freedom from deception. But integrity is more than honesty. It means doing the right thing regardless of circumstances or inconceivable to the leader or the organization” (Cohen, p. 11). At the core of heroic leadership lies the idea that we have to be truthful in order to have others follow us. If others perceive a leader as a liar or as untrustworthy, then no leadership may take place. Also, it means being consistent and not switching sides frequently in one’s belief system. According to Cohen, once you lose your integrity you lose your career and your followers.

One must also “know their stuff,” or be knowledgeable in the field in which one is leading. “People don’t follow leaders because they are good at office politics; they follow them because they are good at what they do. There is no substitute for a leader investing enough time into becoming an expert” (Cohen, p. 28). In order to perform leadership successfully, one has to have the background knowledge in the field to be considered an expert by those who he will lead. It is what you know that counts.
A leader also should declare their expectations and dramatize them to subordinates. A heroic leader clarifies their expectations on immediate tasks, short-term tasks, intermediate goals and objectives, and also provide expectations on how to fall in line with the leaders tactical and long term vision of change. The key idea here is communicating vision and bringing subordinates in line with how the leader wants tasks and goals executed. When expectations are synced between the leader and their subordinates, then real magic can happen in terms of progress towards the leader’s vision. Leaders should plan and implement their vision and break their final objectives into smaller more manageable tasks. They should also create a safe atmosphere where subordinates may question the leader and ask why they are performing a goal. Also, heroic leaders listen to feedback and adjust their strategy as needed.

Beyond the communication of vision is the commitment of the leader to the vision and to the subordinates of the organization. “Successful leaders in battle are extraordinarily committed to their job. This goes far beyond simple determination to succeed. The successful battle leader – the heroic leader – breathes, sleeps, and eats the mission” (Cohen, p. 47). Followers mirror the commitment of their leader. When a leader shows uncommon commitment two major things are shown to subordinates. First it shows that the goal and vision of the leader is worthwhile and second it proves that the leader isn’t going to quit on their subordinates. Followers begin valuing the goal as their own and embody the idea and also begin to match the commitment of the leader. The confidence level in the organization shoots up as well. (Cohen, p. 55).
Heroic leaders also think positively and expect positive results. Heroic leaders visualize success instead of failure. They look for creative solutions that are goal-oriented instead of troubleshooting an endless list of problems. The positive thinking and positive vision of what is to come generates an atmosphere that is oriented towards success. Heroic leaders (while positive) stay real in terms of what is actually achievable.

Another tenant of heroic leadership is that a leader should always take care of “their people.” These people aren’t just the permanent and temporary direct subordinates of the leader, but also the other people who are directly linked to the goal of the organization. According to Cohen your customers need to be taken care of as well. “If you look after your people, they will perform to their maximum capability. If you fail to do this, you won’t be their leader for very long” (Cohen, 79). A heroic leader takes care of their people when things go wrong and also gives the people’s needs priority above their own. They take responsibility for the needs of the organization and its people and also really care about the well-being of the people that are linked to the organizational goal.

Tied into the idea of taking care of one’s people is the idea that a heroic leader puts duty before anything else, including themselves and their own personal agenda. “Duty before self is a law of leadership that is as true in the boardroom as the battlefield. It is a critical part of heroic leadership” (Cohen, p. 81). A heroic leader considers the people and the mission as high priority, considering themselves after. The needs of the mission and the people take precedence over personal needs and the heroic leader shares the pain of the other people in the organization.
Heroic leadership is about getting out on the front lines, not leading from the back. A heroic leader leads where the action is, working in the trenches during the fight. Heroic leaders are up-front leaders who dive headfirst working with others and communicating their leadership by setting the example. They take charge and are willing to do anything that is needed to get the job done (Cohen, p. 99).

Heroic leadership is also about action and performing under high stress in tough situations. Cohen suggests that a heroic-leader’s work requires tools centered on communication persuasion. Heroic leaders need to rely on communication techniques such as direction, indirection, redirection, deflection, enlistment, persuasion, negotiation and involvement. Also, heroic leaders must master special competences to be able to lead in a heroic style. These competencies allow heroic leaders to do things that ordinary leaders can’t or won’t do. Heroic leaders must be able to attract followership, build self-confidence, build a heroic team, develop high morale and esprit de-corps, motivate people when times are tough, take charge in high-stress crisis situations, develop personal charisma, and solve problems and make decisive decisions under pressure (Cohen, p. 159).

Ira Morrow describes the heroic leader as a type. Morrow’s HLM (Heroic Leader Model) has four dimensions. “The HLM begins by focusing on the individual’s character. Next it addresses the individual’s orientation to his/her immediate environment including work, risk-taking, and rewards. It then expands outward to consider the individual’s relationship with others, and the person’s impact on the organization” (Morrow, 1999, p. 5). At the core, the heroic-leader demonstrates various
qualities. Heroic leaders are brave and honest, have integrity, are principled yet flexible, and also inspire trust. Next, in terms of their work orientation, they act first and lead by example.

Morrow explains that these leaders do not just talk, but also act. They work hard and share tasks while delegating authority. Heroic leaders are risk takers and weigh potential rewards for their actions. They assume risk for themselves as well as others in a non-calculating manner. They don’t ask others to take any risks they themselves are not willing to take. Their reward orientation is intrinsically motivated instead of geared towards external rewards. While promotions, raises and bonuses are not spurned, the drive towards excellence is personal. Heroic leaders relate to others, and are seen in communities by acts they perform. They have an unselfish devotion to the needs and interests of others.

To Morrow, heroic-leaders are service oriented and their character is defined by other’s perceptions. They serve as highly-visible models in organizations as pinnacles of excellence. They recognize the individuality of their followers and promote excellence, activating the drive for individuals to accomplish great deeds. They are oriented towards creating win-win situations rather than win-lose situations. In terms of their organizational impact, heroic behavior is emphasized in more dramatic situations. Nevertheless, in less dramatic situations their behavior is still demonstrated by the heroic leader, but may not be acknowledged or glorified. The behavior is still enacted but is subtler; “heroic leadership in the business world, for example, is defined as successful heroic leadership. Unsuccessful heroic leadership, if acknowledged or recognized at all,
may actually lead to a lesson about how not to function as a leader” (Morrow, 1999, p. 13).

Heroic leaders do something worthwhile in their organizations and the outcomes pivot around an organization’s mission or goals. “Heroic leaders embody what the organization currently stands for, and subsequently, the organization’s culture. Their values are consistent with those of the organization, and they believe strongly in the organizations goal and mission” (Morrow, 1999, p. 15). These leaders create vision and purpose in their organizations, and showcase to others what the organization stands for through their actions.

Chris Lowney describes heroic leaders as ones who “imagine an inspiring future and strive to shape it rather than passively watching the future happen around them. Heroes extract gold from the opportunities at hand rather than waiting for golden opportunities to be handed to them” (Lowney, 2003, p. 33). To Lowney, heroic leadership is not just an act, but an entire way of living. It is an ongoing process of self-development that is not only about what a person does, but also who that person is. Leaders influence others and produce change, but heroic leaders adhere to what he calls the four major principles. These principles are self-awareness, ingenuity, love, and heroism.

Lowney explains that heroic-leaders have to understand who they are. “Leaders thrive by understanding who they are and what they value, by becoming aware of unhealthy blind spots or weaknesses that can derail them, and by cultivating the habit of continuous self-reflection and learning” (Lowney, p. 27). Heroic leaders know who they
are and are constantly looking within for the answers on how to lead. Second heroic leaders must have ingenuity. “They explore new ideas, approaches and cultures rather than sharing defensively from what lurks around life’s next corner” (Lowney, p. 29). While the heroic leader explores new ideas and techniques, they always relate back to their non-negotiable value system and principles that are at the heart of their character. Third heroic leaders create an environment and culture that promotes loyalty, affection, and mutual support. This safe environment is one that is open and allows for individuals to cultivate their own potential. Lastly comes the idea that heroic leadership is self-motivated leadership. When one is self-motivated to perform to the best of their capacity, they are performing true heroism. “Heroic leadership is motivating oneself to above-and-beyond performance by focusing on the richest potential of every moment” (Lowney, p. 209). A leader has to lead from within and take every opportunity that he or she can that adheres to their core value system. Heroic leaders believe in and live their vision in every action they do. In heroic leadership, one tries to live an uninterrupted life of heroic-deeds where one strives to perform the exceptional at all times.

Another question arises: What then is a hero? Who is a hero? What is a hero’s role in society?

From a grammatical point of view, a hero (masculine noun) and heroine (feminine noun) denotes a person of distinguished courage or ability, admired for their brave deeds and noble quality. It is important to note that while the word hero does allude to a male dominated patriarchy, the concept itself also includes the feminine, albeit through the word heroine. In this paper I use the word hero only for simplicity, but please note that
heroines are included within the definition and usage. Connotations define a hero (and again, a heroine) as a person who, in the opinion of others, has heroic qualities or has performed a heroic act and is regarded as a model or ideal. In classical mythology it is a being of godlike prowess who has ties with divinity, an immortal being or demigod. Heroism (noun) on the other hand are the qualities or attributes of a hero or heroine and also heroic conduct aka courageous action. To be heroic (adjective) one display the character or attributes of a hero; extraordinary, bold, altruistic, determined, etc. Strangely enough, there is no verb for hero. One cannot “to hero” in the world. One can perform heroism which denotes the qualities of a hero and heroic conduct, but also connotes going above and beyond the call of duty and being courageous (Dictionary.com, 2001). If we take these definitions and combine them we come to a preliminary starting point to define a hero:

A hero is:

A person who,

Has heroic qualities and uses them to go above and beyond the call of duty,

Is admired and has performed a brave, noble, or courageous action,

Is tied to the divine supernatural world

And is regarded as a model or ideal for human behavior.

On a superficial level we can see that these definitions of leader and hero have crossovers. Each point above has a Burkian dramatic quality to it. The idea that a leader is a primary positioned person and the idea that a hero is a person both point to the agent; to an embodied human being, a person who can “be” a leader or a hero. The point that a
leader conducts and evokes action and the point that a hero is admired and has performed a brave, noble, or courageous action point to the action of the characters and how heroes and leaders manifest their being unto the world. The agency, purpose, and scene though are not readily addressed in the dictionary-esque definitions of leadership and heroism.

These preliminary definitions of leadership and heroism based off of everyday use may be adequate for pedestrian understanding of the concepts. I feel that we must delve deeper into the mythic material that makes up both discourses, while keeping in mind the everyday lived world of the words themselves, to form a deeper understanding of both leadership and heroism. We must examine the nature of the characters as described in discourse, we must catalog the dramatic nature of the leader and the hero as found in the various narratives.

The traditional Greek protean hero was considered to be someone who did exceptional action. “Starting out some three millennia ago as a Greek expression for any ‘free man’ or ‘noble,’ the term hero has since been applied to demigods, bandit warriors, martyrs, knights, artists, hedonists, rogues, misfits, and comic-book characters. Moreover, to be ‘heroic’ has gone from a description of simply not being ordinary to an all-purpose rubric for any kind of extra-ordinary action outside, above, or even in disregard of social norms” (Kendrick, p. 65). The definition of a hero in Greek times stemmed from the oral traditional myths such as the Homerian epics. The stories then moved on to military heroes who civilized the west by introducing manners, thought, and a western worldview to the uncivilized individuals in the land.
Greeks in the traditional definition of a Hero had a very specific view on what constituted a hero. “Their notions of heroes and heroic action were rooted in ideas about personal honor, or considerations of individual’s value and worth, which were enmeshed within a social, political, economic and cultural framework that was family-centered, unequal, hierarchical, male dominated, largely poor, and frequently violent. In this world, hero was an honorific of the highest order that was applied only to a very select group of individuals who enjoyed pride of place in both life and death because their deeds and accomplishments surpassed normal expectations and singled them out as first and best among their peers” (Kendrick, p. 95).

The traditional heroic archetype for the Greeks was a man among men, someone who could rival the gods in their ability, and was considered to be semi-divine. These were godlike men who completed deeds that no mortal would dare even attempt. This great man version of heroism was later expanded to include other individuals and actions as well. “While dynasts and noble warriors would remain favored candidates for inclusion in antiquity’s heroic pantheon, intellectual inquiry, religious devotion, and the quest for personal excellence also laid the groundwork about what it meant to be an extraordinary, godlike individual” (Kendrick, p. 104). This was then expanded to include iconoclasts and martyrs, and champion athletes. The Greco-Roman world embraced the Hero and its many definitions. The complex nature of the traditional Greek Heroic Archetype still rings through today in modern heroism.

The heroic journey and the idea of mythological heroism has been an influence on the heroic leadership discourse. Gordon Barnhart describes the heroic journey as life’s
great adventure, and that one should perform leadership as the heroes did in order to be successful.

“What the heroic journey provides is a call to go forth and do things worth doing, quest worth our effort and sacrifice. It also provides guidance about the path required, a path known by almost all cultures throughout history. It provides guidance, a sense of hope and anticipation, asks for our best and it is ennobling by its very nature. It also provides common ground for collective action even among people with diverse backgrounds, stiles, capabilities, gender, race or ethnicity. The path is known and others have gone before. The experience, however is different for each person and each challenge. It is thus both universal and intensely personal” (Barnhart, 2008, p. 5).

This view of heroic leadership challenges individuals to be heroic and embody the virtues of that heroes have portrayed since ancient times. Also, it challenges followers to be heroic as well. I describe this version of heroism in greater detail later in this paper.

According to Joyce K. Fletcher, “post-heroic leadership is a paradigm shift in what it means to be a leader. It re-envisions the who of leadership by challenging the importance of individual achievement, the what of leadership by focusing on collective learning and mutual influence, and the how of leadership by noting the more egalitarian relational skills and emotional intelligence needed to participate in it” (Fletcher, 2002, p. 1). It does not diminish the fact that individuals still perform autonomous and individual achievements and that the heroic model can be applied to discourse. Post-heroic leadership is just another style that is rooted in exploring the weaknesses found in the charismatic heroic leadership idea and providing a counterbalance. It aims to take
leadership that is monopolized by the individual and share it with the collective. Leadership becomes distributed in the post-heroic world. “The first thing to say about distributed leadership is that it is not really a type of leadership at all, for the notion of a ‘distributed leader’ makes little sense. Instead the term describes a situation, as in the leadership of organization X is distributed” (Gronn, 2010, p. 417). Post-heroic leadership is distributed leadership instead of centralized leadership. It is the configuration of power that defines the differences between heroic leadership and post-heroic leadership.

Post-heroic leadership is a direct response to the idea of the “great-man” charismatic heroic leader. The fundamental difference between heroic leadership and post-heroic leadership is one of power. “Heroic leaders use the power of their position to make their decisions unilaterally…by contrast, post-heroic leaders are facilitators…the difference between them is their decision-making style: one is autocratic, the other participative. Both are positional leaders; they lead from a position of authority” (McCrimmon, p. 1, 2010). Post-heroic leadership finds that in “many modern situations, the most appropriate leader is one who can lead others to lead themselves” autonomously, a type of superleadership (Manz, 1991, p.18). The strong-man view of leadership shows that the position of the man in the organization coupled with their strength and skill should be the one who leads. The transformational or trans-actor leader focuses on goals and rewards and their power stems from the ability to recreate followers in their own image. The transactional leader is still the icon of what organizationally one should emulate. The transactional leader is in essence still a hero in an organization and the
catalyst for change. Post-heroic leadership pushes that we should move beyond both the charismatic leader and the transformational leader.

Charles Manz describes the visionary hero as a separate type of leader, where again the source of the leader’s direction and wisdom stems from the leader himself. Post-heroic leadership and Super-leadership stems from the followers, not the centralized leader figure, where collaboration and decentralized leadership is paramount. “The focus of this leadership view is on the followers who become self-leaders. Power is more evenly shared by leaders and followers” (Manz, 1991, p. 22). In superleadership (as a subset of post-heroic leadership) one must first learn how to lead themselves instead of idolizing an outside person. One does this through self-observation, setting personal goals, rewarding oneself, assessing oneself (giving criticism and self-punishment when needed). One should focus on building natural rewards into tasks and focusing on the naturally rewarding features of the work rather than extrinsic bonuses (Manz, 1991, p. 24). Next one becomes the model of self-leadership to employees, very similar to heroic leadership, but then one moves beyond the self to promote self-leadership through teamwork. One must facilitate a self-leadership culture, where individuals are accountable for themselves and provide their own direction in the workplace.

The idea of the heroic leader as the charismatic head of an organization has been challenged by collaborative or post-heroic leadership. “We are seeing the demise of the heroic leader and a rise in collaboration. Because the challenges leaders face are becoming more complex, and therefore more difficult to solve, collaborative leadership is necessary” (Leader, 2006, p. 55). Many factors have contributed to the demise of heroic
leadership. Challenges have become increasingly complex, where one individual may not be able to solve them without the help of others, and there has become a greater reliance on independent work. Reward systems promote teamwork and collaboration and leadership is viewed more as a process rather than an individualistic characteristic (Leader, 2006, p.55). Also, a whole new set of leadership skills that focus on teams and teamwork have aided in battering down the image of the charismatic all-knowing leader.

Also the structural shift in organizational hierarchies from hierarchical to distributed has contributed to the falling of the heroic leader from grace.

“Organizational structure shifts from traditional functioning structure (manufacturing, engineering, sales, human resources, finance, technical, service) to a cross-functional team structure in which there are members of the former departments on the team” is a new trend in the work world. (Eicher, 1997, p. 5).

New customer requirements require 24 hour continuous analysis and changes and organizations have to meet customer needs faster than a single human can process. The evolution from the individual embodied communication in the workplace has migrated to a new virtual organization where the heroic leader is disembodied from the physical aspect of their organizational role.

James P. Eicher describes the post-heroic leader as “competent in the following areas: Negotiating, facilitating choice, joint problem-solving, re-engineering business operations, continuous learning and improvement, and planning for change” (1997, p.7).

To Eicher, heroic leadership is steeped in omnipotence and control, managers need for being right rather than correct, leaders saving face no matter what and the
hierarchical co-dependency on the leader for their skills. In a stressful situation these leaders manage by tightening control, using fear of failure as a tool, and blaming others for losses while rescuing those underneath them if things go well. The shift from this mentality in leadership has turned to the post-heroic style where empowerment and risk-taking of leaders goes hand in hand, where they actively participate and develop their subordinates. “Traditional literature on leadership and organization theory has been dominated almost exclusively by the perspective that leadership is something that is exercised by a single person – the idea of unitary command…the old heroic ideal is the lone leader who feels that his or her leadership is based on superior knowledge and information (omnipotence, fears failure more than anything else (rightness), keeps up appearances at any cost including blaming others (face saving) and views subordinates as inferior creatures in constant need for assistance and rescue (codependency)” (Crevani, 2007, p. 48)

Post-heroic leadership stresses the difference in power when leadership is centralized vs. decentralized. Heroic leadership is all about one person embodying the culture and leading from them their own self. Post-heroic leadership is about distribution of power and decision making. Today leaders have to decide if they should adopt more traditional leadership practices or integrate more distributed post-heroic ideas on leadership into their workplace.

When we think of followers, we usually think of individuals who just follow leaders. We don’t think about the nature of the relationship between leaders and
followers. Leaders only exist within the networks that they manage. A leader is not a leader unless there is someone to follow them and call them a leader.

On an intrapersonal level, someone can perceive themselves to be a leader. If they perform the actions of leadership then they are a leader, but for the purposes of this thesis we have to look at interpersonal, group, and cultural distinctions of leadership. Here leadership is co-constructed from the actions of the leader and the perceptions of the actions from the followers. The drama that a leader performs creates the lens of perception. Normally this is a passive relationship when we look at performer and audience, as the audience does not usually have an active role in constructing the narrative. For leadership, the followers actually interact with the leader and perform actions within the paradigm of the leaders proposed scope of action. There is an interplay of identity and action between leaders and followers. In essence, followers enact followership in the same way that leaders enact leadership.

The co-constructed identity of the leader and follower is dependent drama, and Burke’s dramatic pentad did not take into account directly the viewpoint of the audience as a mechanism for co-constructed narrative meaning. Meaning instead was constructed by virtue of the actor trying to show the audience that their version of reality is true. While this may work for drama in general, it does not address the co-constructed relationship between leaders and followers. The relationship between these two groups is not a passive one, in which the leader expresses character drama; instead meaning is interpersonally created in every action. Leaders and followers generate their own narrative through the acts of leadership and acts of followership.
A follower can be defined as “…one who pursues a course of action in common with a leader to achieve an organizational goal. Effective followers make an active decision to contribute towards the achievement of the goal and demonstrate enthusiasm, intelligence, self-reliance and the ability to work with others in pursuit of the goal” (Crevani, 231). In essence, followers perform the same actions as leaders. They are actively engaged in the work that a leader does. Heroic leaders actively pursue action heroically. In the same way, a heroic follower would do the same, trying to achieve the same goals. Heroic leaders character and drama is perceived by their followers and their character is co-constructed by perceptions of their own actions as well as the perceptions of their followers and their followers actions. This cycle is performed with each action and roles and character is negotiated daily. Character identification is co-constructed and co-performed in everyday life.

Identification with the audience is key for heroic leaders to be perceived as performing heroic leadership. A heroic leader needs to identify with their followers and followers need to identify with their leaders. When leaders perform heroic drama and leadership, they still have to identify with their followers and followers need to accept the character. This is a dialectic relationship. The leader is who they are because of whom they perceive they are, while the follower perceives the leader because of what they perceive they are. Therefore the leader is not just because they are, but because of whom the audience, or followers in this case perceives they are. Followership is an active process of drama, one that I don’t touch upon much in this thesis but can be expanded upon in future research.
Leaders by virtue of what they do are agents of change. Followers can also be considered agents of change within similar constraints as leaders. They can perform leadership in the same way if they follow the same framework that the leader shows. Look at grassroots politics, participatory councils and activists. There are many instances of followers following the framework of certain leaders in order to continue their work. Followers can perform leadership actions and become leaders themselves. In the same way, heroic followership, or acting in a heroic way while following the framework a heroic leader has dramatized is a viable method for empowerment. Heroism and heroic leadership is not entrenched in the leaders themselves but in the drama. Followers can become heroic leaders if they follow the dramatic framework and tenets of leadership. Followers, by virtue of following heroic leaders themselves may become heroic leaders. Also heroic leaders are co-constructed by the perceptions of their followers. Let us turn back to heroic leadership.

Heroic leadership as drama can be seen as setting a framework of action and drama, and followership is when others co-construct meaning within the heroic framework. According to Hurwitz (Hurwitz, 2015), leaders point the way and show commitment to the mission, while followers build on and value the ideas of others, and confirm the priorities and maximize contributions within it (Hurwitz, p. 30). “Leadership skill in the world is meaningless (or, at least, less meaningful) if there isn’t a complementary followership skill” (Hurwitz, p. 31). The pedagogy of leadership currently is that it can be taught, is a skill, and requires just intrinsic aptitude from the leader. I am proposing a paradigm shift from that traditional viewpoint. Leaders are co-
constructed from the drama they perform and the perceptions of their followers. 

Followers are co-constructed in the same way. A heroic leader would be one that performs within the context of the myth of heroic leadership, as well as within the perception of the followers. In addition they promote the followers to perform heroic leadership, and in doing so elevate and democratize the discourse, creating new heroic leaders who enact positive change in the world. In essence, the followers are no longer followers but instead heroic leaders themselves.
Chapter 3: Dramaturgic Analysis of Heroism and Leadership

Act of Leadership

The act of leadership has been represented in many ways. Transformational and charismatic leadership focuses on the affective elements of leadership. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. “Transformational leaders are innovative and foresighted. They constantly challenge the status quo by seeking out new ideas, products, and ways of performing tasks” (Hackman, 2009, p. 105). Charismatic leaders are often seen as creative, interactive, visionary, empowering, and passionate. They are often considered the superstars of leadership, with almost magical talent. Sociologically, the charismatic leader must “periodically demonstrate his or her exceptional personal gifts in order to maintain power over followers” (Hackman, 2009, p. 125). Culbertson (1993) believes that “leadership is a two-way street – a complex relationship between a leader and his followers.” This is a more communicative view of leadership where a leader builds and keeps morale and also completes group tasks. He refers to these functions as group-maintenance and task-achievement. A leader is gauged on their ability to fulfill these two criteria, not how charismatic they are. The agency of leadership resides in the tasks they perform. The act and the agency are showcased in the above example.

Peter Block (2009) explains that engagement is the point of leadership. Currently there are certain doxic leadership theories. First, a leader is at the top and is essential. They are role models for others. This follows our premises that leaders are primary
positioned individuals and that they give direction and guidance on how to execute action and manage behavior. Second, the task of a leader is to “define the destination and the blueprint to get there.” This falls in line with our premise that leaders are the compendium for proper behavior within a set culture.

Leaders also bring others to work, they “enroll, align and inspire… and leaders provide for the oversight, measurement, and training needed (as defined by leaders) (Block, p. 87). This puts leaders in an elite group above and beyond other individuals. He suggests we hold leaders to three tasks; first to create a context that nurtures an alternate future based on altruistic values, second to have conversations that change experience, and third to listen and pay attention to others. With this framework, a leader creates the context for communal transformation.

Cynthia Phoel (2006) believes that part of a leader’s work is to construct narratives and to use them effectively. The act of leadership is directly linked with the ability to choose the right story, at the right time, in a way that will be well received. In order to do this a leader must have a clear purpose, identify an example of successful change, tell the truth, say who, what, when, trim excess detail, and underscore the cost of failure. (Phoel, 2006, p. 4)

*Act and Agent of Heroism*

If we look back to times where oral culture flourished this job was assigned to the seers and mystics, the storytellers of pre-modern man. Myth was the tool to pass down
institutional knowledge and to disseminate cultural values and beliefs. “Knowledge, once acquired, had to be constantly repeated or it would be lost: fixed, formulaic thought patterns were essential for wisdom and effective administration” (Ong, p. 23). Narratives in oral culture were repetitive by necessity. Once a narrative was told, it was gone forever, each phrase lost in time after it was finished. There was no textual representation; nothing of the narrative remained for one to work over except for what one remembered in the mind. Those who memorized the narratives and shared them had power in society. The stories gave guidance and taught the values and beliefs of a given culture to an audience. Stories of different types were created and many vanished. The ones that a culture held on to and passed down from generation to generation that connected the knowledge of the ancients with the life world of the embodied communicator living in the present day are called myths.

“Myths are stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance… We need for life to signify, to touch the eternal, to understand the mysterious, to find out who we are” (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 4). “Myth teaches [man] the primordial ‘stories’ that have constituted him existentially; and everything connected with his existence and his legitimate mode of existence in the Cosmos concerns him directly” (Eliade, p. 13). The oral storyteller, in order to pass down the knowledge, had to situate the mandates of the gods into the living world of man. In order to do this, the stories employed the archetypal figure of the hero, a man or woman who was able to transcend the boundaries and limitations of a culture in order to create new meaning in the world.
The agent and act of the hero is intertwined. The hero, or an individual who enacted change in the world, was the compendium for proper behavior within a set culture because he embodied the behavior through the story of his/her life. The hero gives direction and guidance on how to execute action and manage behavior within the culture’s ideological constraints through the narrative that was orally shared from town, to city, to country. The hero is the agent who guides action, and the action is to manage human culture.

In terms of the agent of heroism, the hero concept of ancient times is antiquated today. It is a difficult idea to use because heroes bring with them ties to the supernatural and the gods. Heroes were the human link between natural and supernatural. “Hero myths transform humans into virtual gods by conferring on them divine qualities. The qualities can range from physical attributes – strength, size, looks – to intangible ones – intelligence, drive, integrity” (Segal, 2000, p. 7). The great man myth derives from hero-worship. The great man myth explains that the hero is a god among men, a prophet whose qualities are derived from the gods above. The hero is the dramatic agent of change, the leader of bringing the sacred into the lived world of the human. They seem to only be a remnant of an oral tradition that has been long forgotten by modern man. In the place of the hero we have the modern leader as the catalyst for change. Parts of narrative fidelity and probability still hold the leader’s character in check in order for them to be effective.

The agent of the hero (and a leader too) must be a believable one. Aristotle explains that the most important part of persuasive speech is the character of the
individual who is speaking. (Aristotle & Kennedy, 2007, p. 20). When we look at the hero’s character in ancient times we can see that the character of the hero portrayed within the discourse is of utmost importance. Heroes had to be strong, virtuous individuals who stood out from the common man. “Oral memory works effectively with ‘heavy’ characters, persons whose deeds are monumental, memorable and commonly public” (Ong, p. 69). The heroic agent is a memorable one.

Heroes had a hidden purpose in terms of the actions they performed. Heroes also had to embody the virtues that were necessary for society to function. They were the guides to behavior in a set culture. Aristotle's terminology of ethos can be translated as "moral character." "At times, however, the word seems to refer to qualities, such as an innate sense of justice or a quickness of temper, with which individuals may be naturally endowed and which dispose them to certain kinds of action" (Aristotle & Kennedy, 2007, p. 148). “Society’s heroes both reflect social norms and shape them. When people select heroes, they choose individuals who exemplify and personify virtues valued in society. In turn, the heroes become standards of excellence that people can identify with and, if they wish, strive to emulate” (Aristotle & Kennedy, 2007, p. 543). The hero is the paragon of ideals in a society that others can try to become. They become icons representing cultural meaning. The hero is a moral individual who carries with him the qualities of the supernatural world, bestowing knowledge and understanding to man around him. The agent embodies the act so to speak, and the act defines the agent.

“Myths offer life models. But the models have to be appropriate to the time in which you are living, and our time has changed so fast that what was proper fifty years ago is not
The virtues of the past are the vices of today. And many of what were thought to be the vices of the past are the necessitates of today” (Campbell, 1988, p. 16).

In terms of the pentad, heroism had many purposes and was done (agency) in many ways because the actions they committed was intertwined with who they were.

The pentad helps us frame our understanding on the hero’s place in today’s world. The hero construct as the leader and agent of change no longer fits in with the culture of a literate world. “Mythology is static, we find the same mythical elements combined over and over again” (Levi-Strauss, p. 40). The structural agent of a hero seems to have been replaced by the structural agent of the leader. The hero is the precursor to the modern leader, the agent of change in society, the role model for bringing new themes and meaning to a society. The origins of the hero’s messages stemmed from the world beyond that of the human where gods and demons roamed. The hero had to travel to be the bridge between the supernatural and the human. In the same way, the leader of today has to bridge the gap between his/her own ideological organizational vision of the future and the lived world of his/her followers.

Cross culturally there are certain themes that occur in generally the same format such as the mythological theme of the hero. The hero archetype is one of an individual who travels in a cycle of death and rebirth to the world. "Whether the hero be ridiculous or sublime, Greek or barbarian, gentile or Jew, his journey varies little in essential plan" (Campbell, 2011, p. 38).

Today we can turn to the idea of the superhero as one of the primary agents of heroism. The superhero is the epitome of the charismatic leader. They do “good” and
fight “evil,” have superhuman qualities and perform under stressful situations. Superheros range from costumed crime fighters to individuals with great supernatural power. They tend to have a strong moral and ethical code and are often coupled with a sidekick. The superhero usually has a secret identity and a character flaw that is larger than life. The superhero as the agent of heroism is not accessible to the average person because they live lives that are beyond the realm of the normal. The lives of superheroes are fantastic, action ridden, and usually dangerous. Nonetheless, they add to our understanding of what a hero is in our culture.

So how do we act as heroes? If we look back at our grammatical definition of heroism, we can see that there is no verb “to hero.” One can’t go out and just “do hero” somewhere, but one can “do heroism.” One can perform the various attributes of the hero, and live the life process of a hero. To be a hero one must do heroism: one must live the philosophy and take the journey of the archetypal hero. The scene of the hero is day to day life, the everyday and mundane. It would seem that a hero departs from the mundane and “does heroism,” becoming a hero. The doing of heroic deeds, of acting in a heroic way and performing heroic conduct sets the scene of the hero. Without the act, the scene does not exist. This cycle is useful for portraying the development of plot of a co-constructed narrative in order to portray an individual as a hero. Again the individual traits of the hero are not constructed within the journey, instead they are a synthesis of individual identity creation and cultural shared archetypes.
Let’s explore the dramatic dimension of being the “Agent” of leadership. If we look behind the statement that “a leader is a primary positioned individual,” we can see that it concerns itself with the agent of Burke’s dramatic pentad. Who is this leader? There are many approaches that aim to fill in who a leader is. Trait, skill, and style theories of leadership all aim to fill out the character of a leader.

The trait approach to leadership is one of the first systematic approaches concerned with examining the agent of leadership practice. This theory focuses on an individual’s physical and social attributes (Eisenberg, p. 250). The trait approach is grounded in the belief that people are born with innate characteristics that allowed them to be leaders. “Research on the traits of leaders has not been able to demonstrate that any combination of physical and psychological characteristics guarantee an individual will be an effective leader in all situations. There does however, seem to be a set of traits (competencies or skills, as they have been labeled by some researchers) that appear to differentiate successful leaders from their less successful counterparts” (Hackman, p. 74).

Michael Z. Hackman explains that interpersonal competencies, cognitive factors, personality factors, motivational factors and knowledge factors can be linked to the perception of one being seen as a leader. The agent of leadership in this case must have many beneficial inherent traits.

The skills approach was challenged in 1948 when a researcher named Ralph Stogdill "suggested that no consistent set of traits differentiated leaders from non-leaders
across a variety of situations. An individual with leadership traits who was a leader in one situation might not be a leader in another situation" (Northouse, p. 15). The outcome of these findings pointed to leadership being a relationship between people in a social setting and that while personal factors were important, those factors had to be evaluated within the context and requirements of the individual situation that the leadership actions take place in.

Stogdill conducted a survey where he studied what traits were positively identified with leadership. These include "drive for responsibility and task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, venturesomeness and originality in problem solving, drive to exercise initiative in social situations, self-confidence and sense of personal identity, willingness to accept consequences of decision and action, readiness to absorb interpersonal stress, willingness to tolerate frustration and delay, ability to influence other people's behavior, and capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand" (Northouse, p. 17).

Richard D. Mann did a similar survey and found "intelligence, masculinity, adjustment, dominance, extraversion, and conservatism" (Northouse, p. 17) as desirable traits. Richard Lord did a meta-analysis of Mann's findings and found that "intelligence, masculinity, and dominance were significantly related to how individuals perceived leaders" (Northouse, p. 17). Overall the major leadership traits as outlined by Northouse are as follows: Intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.

The skills approach to defining the agent of leadership moves away from "personality characteristics, which usually are viewed as innate and largely fixed, to an
emphasis on skills and abilities that can be learned and developed" (Northouse, p. 39). The skills based approach has within it three main skill types that are necessary to lead within an organization. There is technical skill, human skill, and conceptual skill. This skills approach is known as the three-skill’s model. Peter Northouse outlines Troy V. Mumsford’s model as being useful in understanding how the skills approach can be utilized. Within the model, the three core competencies that frame a leader’s performance are put within a general framework: There are individual attributes, competencies, and leadership outcomes. Within individual attributes there is general cognitive ability, crystallized cognitive ability, motivation and personality. Next are the competencies where the skills lie. These skills include problem-solving skills, social judgment skills and knowledge based skills. Lastly are the outcomes which are effective problem solving or performance. Acting upon these areas are career experience and environmental influences (Northouse, p. 51). The agent of leadership in this case is a very skillful person.

While the trait approach looked at the personality of the leader and the skills approach looked at the capabilities of the leader, the styles approach is different because it examines the behavior of the leader. There are two types of behaviors: task behaviors, which move towards goal accomplishment, and relationship behaviors, which allow for mutual rapport and comfort in the world. The realm of behavior can be placed on a grid. One axis is concern for people while on the other axis is concern for results. Within the scope of the grid lies the ways that one can lead. Depending on how much concern you have for people or for end results gives you your leadership style. Again this is based on
behavior. The styles range from country club management to authority-compliance management, to team managed and impoverished management. In addition to the "grid styles" there are also paternal/maternal management styles and opportunistic styles. The agent of leadership is a master of human behavior and style.

Situational leadership on the other hand looks at what situation the leader is in to define his role/style. "The essence of situational leadership demands that a leader match his or her style to the competence and commitment of the subordinates. Effective leaders are those who can recognize what employees need and then adapt their own style to meet those needs" (Northouse, p. 92). There are four basic leadership styles that can be found across two axes. The first axis is supportive behavior and the second is directive behavior. Area one is low supportive and low directive. In here the leader would be delegating. Area two is high supportive and low directive. The leader is supporting the individual, helping them by being positive and pushing them, but not directing their actual activities. Next is high directive and high supportive behavior. Here is where personal coaches lie. The coaching mentality is highly supportive and dictates what the individual does to get the job done. Lastly is high directive and low supportive behavior. The second part of this model worries about the development level of the people being lead. Depending on their competency and their dedication to the task, different leadership methods can be employed. The agent of leadership is a master of matching their leadership style to work with their follower’s style.

Satoris S. Culbertson (1993) groups the agent of leadership into three categories. First there are institutional leaders, or legitimizers. These are the figureheads who do
little work in the program but are seen as the figurehead of the institution. Second there are effectors, or the workhorses of the business world who make decisions on how to get things done. Lastly there are activists, or the people who do the actions, leading by example in the community. The agent of leadership is a figurehead to an institution.

Agency of Leadership

Let’s turn our attention to agency. Leaders act in the world. According to Culbertson (1993), “leadership is a two-way street – a complex relationship between a leader and his followers” (Culbertson, 1993, p. 25). “Leaders do several kinds of things to influence the behavior of those being led. It’s a rare leader who can do all of these things well. So rare, in fact, that group dynamics theorists call him a ‘great man’” (Culbertson, 1993, p. 25). To understand what the act of leadership is, we must also look at the agency of the act, or how it is performed. A leader models the way, inspires a shared vision, challenges the process, enables others to act, and encourages the heart (Kouzes, 2002, p. 26). This is the act of leadership and the purpose of leadership in a way.

Myth “fulfills an indispensable function – it express[es], enhance[es] and codifi[es] belief, safe-guarding morality by providing practical rules for the guidance of individuals” (Danesi, p.257). As Roland Barthes put it, everything can be a myth, and myth is a type of speech (Barthes, p. 109). The theories about what leaders and heroes do are discursive artifacts open to analysis.
For example, Janet Holmes (2003) examines how people ‘do’ leadership (the agency of leadership). Leadership was traditionally defined as “the ability to influence others” (Holmes, 2003, p.32). Holmes explains that notions of ‘good’ or ‘effective’ leadership performance was defined by organizational outcomes. Good leadership is seen if the desired outcome in an organization is reached. If the outcome is not reached, the leadership is lacking. This view of leadership tends to overlook the actual discursive practices that people employ in order to perform leadership. The agency of leadership here derives from human behavior.

In terms of agency, “doing leadership entails competent communicative performance which, by influencing others, results in acceptable outcomes for the organization (transactional/task-oriented goal), and which maintains harmony within the team or community of practice (relational/people oriented goal)” (Holmes, 2003, p. 32). Transactional behaviors relate to the actual problem that needs to be solved or the task that needs to be achieved. The relationally oriented behaviors concentrate on creating and maintaining relationships and creating a productive work atmosphere (Holmes, 2003). ‘This definition of the discourse of effective leadership takes particular account of a person’s communicative behavior as a crucial component in achieving the desired outcomes. It includes ‘transactional aspects of leadership, but also highlights more dynamic, interactional, and ‘relational’ aspects of leadership, and conceptualizes leadership as a process or an activity, rather than focusing on the outcomes or achievements of leaders’” (Holmes, 2003, p. 33). The agency of leadership lies in the behaviors and how they relate to the problem that needs to be solved.
Maurice Hall (2007) on the other hand argues that there are three items that are very important to investigate when we look at leadership as a multifaceted discourse. First is that we should look at context, second situation, and third the subjective experiences of individuals within the organization. In the past there were many psychological approaches including trait, situational, and contingency theories of leadership. This psychological focus on leadership has created “leader-centrism…a narrow emphasis on the individual leader and his or her cognitive processing and perceptions, to the exclusion of an additional focus on social process” (Hall, 2007, p. 194). Hall’s argument has to do with the scene of leadership, and the agents experiences within those scenes.

“Social constructionist approaches to studying leadership include a focus on subjectivity, identities, relationships, cultures and linguistic communities, organizations as macro-actors, linguistic repertoires and discourses as standalone systems of thought” (Hall, 2007, p. 195). Hall shows that it is important to examine leadership “not as an isolated event performed by a unique actor but as an emerging social construction embedded in a unique organization … a contextual leadership” (Hall, 2007, p. 195). Leadership is very much dependent on context. A change in the context changes the way that leadership patterns are enacted and which leadership behaviors are considered effective. Context and history must be considered, where “leadership is embedded in the context of the entire organization and is not ‘the property of the individual’” (Hall, 2007, p. 196).
Hall also examines Universalist conceptions of leadership and the previous literature around it. “Researcher’s assumptions of reified reality often leads to a search for one best style of leadership, one best way to behave as a leader, or one best conceptualization of the role of leader” (Hall, 2007). The problem with this approach is that organizations change on a daily basis. No one approach to training and developing leaders will work in all circumstances. Hall also talks about how traditional leadership research is reflective of the views that upper-tier management has, and these views are elitist and white/male dominated. The perspectives of people at the bottom or middle of the organization are rarely explored. With this in mind, there has become a larger emphasis in leadership research on the collective construction of reality and the use of communication to understand that reality. Hall does say that objective based leadership approaches are important, but he also says that “the value of the talk of lower level organizational members in understanding how meaning about leadership are co-constructed in organizations seem to be overlooked (Hall, 2007, p. 198). The scene of leadership here takes place in a very segregated area where power is disproportionate.

There is value in examining how leaders and organizational member’s transactions co-create meaning about the very discourse of leadership. The boundaries of leadership as an idea is created by the talk about leader. Again, organizational members talk is contextual and situational. The experiences of individuals vary based off of their position in the organizational hierarchy. “Hearing organizational members define their perspectives of leadership adds to the managerial perspectives codified in the research literature and honors the principles of collaboration, collective co-construction of
organizational life, and mutual disclosure and learning that have become the hallmark of healthy organizational systems” (Hall, 2007, p. 198). “Native” talk about leadership should be seen as organizational clues. These clues are then used to understand values, beliefs, and feelings around leadership. When examining these various clues one should view talk reflective practice and make sure to keep in mind reflexivity (Hall, 2007).

In terms of leadership agency, John C. Maxwell’s approach enacting leadership and developing a leader’s persona is to follow his twenty-one irrefutable laws of leadership. When a leader understands and can embody the laws, they become a leader. “Each law is like a tool, ready to be picked up and used to help you achieve your dreams and add value to other people. Pick up even one, and you will become a better leader. Master them all, and people will gladly follow you” (Maxwell, 2002, p. xi). The various laws describe leadership behavior. A leader must learn to navigate relationships, learn self-sacrifice, empower others and create buy-in. A leader creates growth, commands respect, and has good timing among other things.

Leader-member-exchange theory examines the dyadic relationship between the leader and the members of the group that are being led. In this theory there are “in-groups” and “out-groups” that a leader deals with. Also there are phases within the leadership process. In phase one the leader is a stranger. In terms of agency, roles are scripted, influence is one way, exchanges are low quality and interests are self-serving. Phase two is when the individual is an acquaintance. Here roles are tested, influences are mixed, exchanges are of medium quality, and interests are to the self and other. Phase three is the partner stage. Here roles are negotiated, influences are reciprocal, exchanges
are high quality and interests are for the group. This is one of the few networked leadership theories that is grounded in mutual exchange and co-construction of roles.

Discursive leadership focuses on the “social, linguistic, and cultural aspects of leadership as reflected in concrete interactional processes” (Eisenberg, 2010, p. 257). There are two types of discourse when examining leadership from this perspective. Little-D discourse looks at the everyday talk and conversations that people have to understand leadership. Big-D discourse is concerned with how cultural narratives of knowledge and power are reflected in talk. A discursive view on leadership allows for a better understanding of how we use concepts in everyday life. Here the scene of leadership is situated in communication and negotiated between people.

Agency of Heroism

So what then is truly the agency of the hero, and how does one perform it? Where does it happen? This is not an easy question to tackle, as the scene of the hero is one that traverses the boundaries of the world, beyond the natural into the supernatural. It is one that connects the world to the unknown, and it is in the actions of the hero that the scene changes. One cannot just explore the scene of heroism without addressing the act and agency of it in the same place. “A hero ventures forth from the world of the common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons upon his fellow man” (Campbell, 1973, p. 45). The act of the
hero is to leave the world in some way, find knowledge and understanding, and bring it back to man. The act is one of destruction of the old and creation of the new. The actual location of the heroic acts may be different based on the narrative, and the agency of the acts may differ slightly, but the pattern of death and rebirth, finding knowledge and sharing knowledge remains the same.

There are many stories that imbed within them the hero archetype. These narratives vary in their scene, from underwater fairylands to the bleak desolate landscape of a war-torn land. The scenes differ as much as the actual actions of the heroes in them. One can become a hero by performing various acts. Some fairy tales depict a prince who rescues a princess. Others portray the warrior hero who slays the dragon and saves the day. The socio-political hero may enact policies that help a community and a business hero may create and execute a vision that brings a company into the black from the red. The “where” and the” how” of heroism differ greatly but the act itself, the “what,” remains relatively the same. The act that heroes perform is the journey of heroism. This pattern of heroism has three major sections. First is in the human land of the mundane that the hero transcends. The second act takes place in the supernatural realm where knowledge is found. The third act constitutes the return of the hero to the land of the mundane to share the knowledge and change the world. Various individuals have cataloged the journey. While no two heroes’ journey are exactly the same, there is a basic pattern that emerges that most heroes perform.

Lord Raglan (1990) explains that there is a pattern that is present in most hero myths concerning traditional heroes. These would be heroes such as Hercules or Robin
Hood. To Raglan mythology is primarily concerned with ritual and many of the stories contain the same rituals over and over again. The accounts of heroic men were accounts of their life and the rituals that they went through, but the actual deeds themselves could vary. The pattern he found is as follows:

"(1) The hero's mother is a royal virgin; (2) His father is a king, and (3) Often a near relative of his mother, but (4) Circumstances of his conception are unusual, and (5) He is also reputed to be the son of a god. (6) At birth an attempt is made, usually by his father or his maternal grandfather, to kill him, but (7) He is spirited away, and (8) Reared by foster-parents in a far country. (9) We are told nothing of his childhood, but (10) on reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom. (11) After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast, (12) He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and (13) becomes king.

14) For a time he reigns uneventfully, and (15) Prescribes laws, but (16) Later he loses favor with the gods and/or his subjects, and

17) Is driven from the throne and city, after which (18) He meets with a mysterious death, (19) often at the top of a hill. (20) His children, if any, do not succeed him. (21) His body is not buried, but nevertheless (22) He has one or more holy sepulchers" (Raglan, 1990, p. 138).

Raglan finds that the life of a hero can be broken up into this main series of events. There are three possibilities for these resemblances. First is that the stories were altered to meet a ritual pattern. Second is that the individuals in the stories were real people who lived the ritual pattern, and the third is that they are all purely mythical
(Raglan, 1990, p. 148). He also notes that there are three groups of events: "those connected with the hero's birth, those connected with his accession to the throne, and those connected with his death" (Raglan, 1990, p. 148). The life of the hero is then a set of ritual stages that one must pass in order to move on to the next event. One is a hero then by living through the prescribed narrative outline or having a narrative written about oneself that follows the model's format. The agency is found in the narrative structure of the hero’s life.

The monomyth as a narrative form outlines the journey/places a hero goes to. The order of the narrative is as follows: The Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, The crossing of the First Threshold, The Belly of the Whale, The Road of Trials, The Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as the Temptress, Atonement with the Father, Apotheosis, The Ultimate Boon, Refusal to Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of the Two Roads, Freedom to Live (Campbell, 1968, p. 10). Each of these sections are what Levi-Strauss calls metamemes. Each metameme is a narrative structural element that can be added, subtracted or moved and they represent parts of a myth or story. The overall narrative remains the same, but the order is different in various stories. In literary theory the stages of the hero’s journey starts with the ordinary world, followed by the call to adventure, refusing the call, meeting with a mentor, crossing a threshold, passing tests, meeting allies and enemies, approaching the inmost cave, dealing with an ordeal, gaining reward, traveling back, resurrecting, and returning with a precious elixir (Vogler, 2007, p. 8). The hero travels through life across various different roads, but the journey itself is
shared by all heroes. The individual location is immaterial, the process of going through it is what sets an individual up to be a hero. "Whether the hero be ridiculous or sublime, Greek or barbarian, gentile or Jew, his journey varies little in essential plan" (Campbell, 1968, p. 38). "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (Campbell, 1968, p. 30). The agency again is situated in the journey and the life of the hero, while the scene is the world’s stage.

Scene of Leadership

Where does the scene of leadership take place? Our grammatical definition does not give us many clues as to where leadership happens. We know that leadership is done by people, so it must be situated in the life world of human beings. We also know that leadership gives direction, but to whom? Leadership is communicated to other people, either interpersonally, in a group setting, or with messages across a given culture. Leadership can happen anywhere that narratives are open to be accepted. “The ultimate impact of the leader depends most significantly on the story that he or she relates or embodies, and the receptions to that story on the part of audiences (or collaborators or followers)” (Gardner, 1995, p. 14). The scene of leadership then would be where communication can take place. It is at the central location of where individual meets community, human and the world.
Let's look at post-heroic leadership and the scene of leadership. The post-heroic style of leadership can be thought of as an organizational scene that focuses on the idea that leadership should be equal and distributed in groups instead of centralized within an individual. Traditionally, leadership is centralized in a “great man” or central figure. Post-heroic leadership demotes the agent and agency of individual leaders, while promotes a scene that shares leadership across a distributed network. The purpose of leadership remains the same. With this in mind, heroic actions can still be embodied by other things, such as groups and organizations. Collaboration can be a scene for leadership and leadership can take place in distributed networks. Post-heroic leadership gives us a new scene, and redefines a leader to not just be a person, but also a group or an organization.

Peter Block explains that “the core task of leaders is to create the conditions of civic or institutional engagement” (Block, p. 86) in order to build community. Building community is one of the main tasks of a leader and in this fabricated community one can find the scene of leadership.

Historically leadership has manifested in three ways in society. Jeffrey Nielsen (2004) explains that there is the “big man” society, the “chieftain” society, and the “hierarchical” society. The big man society is dominated by individuals who maintain control of others through the threat of physical force. Status is determined by proximity to the “big man.” In chieftain society, control is created and maintained through physical force as well, but not from the individual. Instead it is enforced through the organization that the chieftain leads. Power and the right to rule the organization is determined
through position in the organization, status is determined by position. The hierarchical society is a multi-tiered, structured, and has occurred over the last six thousand years. The highest levels of the organization control the majority of the power and the control is maintained through the threat of loss of one’s position within the organization. (Nielsen, p. 44).

It would seem then that leadership is situated in organizations. It can be an organization of two or more, but nonetheless leadership is performed out there, in the discourse between people. One cannot be a leader without having someone to lead. Also by virtue of the interpersonal dynamic of leadership, power differences are bound to happen. The agent of leadership by virtue of being in the scene and performing the acts of leadership change the scene itself to conform to the views of the leader. This act of re-creating the world in their own image, teaching and sharing ideology, and communicating knowledge to the world inherently creates a power dynamic.

The first grammatical point of leadership shows us that leadership is done by a primary positioned person. This definition of leadership is riddled with the fallacy of ranked based thinking. Traditionally organizations were constructed top down, with leaders above subordinates. The leaders would have legitimate power over others because of their position within the organization. Classical management theories are hierarchical. From the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, organizations mainly constructed themselves top-down. A president would have a production manager below him, then plant managers below the production manager, etc. (Eisenberg, p. 62). While the position of an individual is important, it is not a necessary component of being
a leader. Ernest Bormann at the University of Minnesota studied emergent leadership. This is natural leadership that is spontaneous in small groups. “Instead of choosing [or giving legitimate power to] a leader immediately, the group eliminates leader contenders until only one person is left” (Hackman, p. 203). The people who are seen as unsuitable candidates for leadership are removed from the running. First those who are seen as too quiet, too rigid or too aggressive are removed. After this, the ones that are seen as unintelligent and uniformed are removed. After this social relations and communication become paramount to emerging as the viable leader in a group (Hackman, p. 204). Northhouse (p. 3) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. In this definition of leadership, rank or position has nothing to do with being a leader. Influence and the power to achieve denotes a leader in this case. Leadership purpose is to achieve power, and having power denotes leadership actors.

Traditionally, the actor of leadership is a singular person. This brings up the question of whether or not one has to be a “person” to be a leader. Can ideas or organizations be leaders too? What does it mean for a company to say that they are a “leader” in technology, or a nation to be a “leader” healthcare and education? Here the dictionary definition of leadership shines. A leader is something that is primarily positioned compared to other things. Here we can re-write leadership to be: a primary positioned entity. Something does not have to be a person to be a leader in these cases. In human communication, on the other hand, a leader is an embodied human being who performs items from our dictionary communication of leadership, namely that a leader
conducts and evokes action, is the compendium for proper behavior within a set culture, and gives direction and guidance on how to execute action and manage behavior within a culture’s ideological constraints. What does it mean to be a human leader then? There are many theories explaining what it means to be “a leader.” There are many approaches that explain what it means to be an embodied human communicative leader.

Scene of Heroism

The scene of heroism takes place on a journey, and within what Victor Turner calls liminal spaces. It is on the stage of life, in this realm and the one beyond that we find the hero. Liminal spaces are the realm between two different existential planes of existence. Heroes border on the realm of the real and the super-real, and traverse the liminal boundary between the two. Charles La Shure explains Victor Turner’s liminality as when individuals or entities are “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony” (Shure, 2005, p. 1). The hero resides in the land of the liminal, neither here in our land or in the other. This is the mythic space. The rules get turned upside down as does our views and frame of mind. It is not just that the hero goes to the supernatural realm, they are helping to break apart the liminal boundary that is neither here nor there, creating a new space for meaning. The power of myth resides in the ability for heroes to create liminal space.

"A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won:
the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (Campbell, p. 30). With this plot line outlined it then falls back to the definition of what a hero is and how they are essential to narratives. The archetype of the hero is a pattern of human existence that has been repeated throughout the ages. It stems from the archetype of the hero. Tami D. Cowden explains the various heroic archetypes: Males have the chief, the bad boy, the best friend, the charmer, the lost soul, the professor, the swashbuckler and the warrior. With females there is the boss, the seductress, the spunky kid, the free spirit, the waif, the librarian, the crusader, and the nurturer (Cowden, 2000, p. iii). Carol S. Pearson explains that we have the following archetypes of the hero: the innocent, the orphan, the warrior, the caregiver, the seeker, the destroyer, the lover, the creator, the ruler, the magician, the sage and the fool (Pearson, 1991, p. 1). We can clearly see how these character archetypes relate directly to the heroic agent, and even to the heroic purpose and agency in some ways.

According to Cowden, a “true” hero or heroine is one who taps into the mythological collective unconscious. They are universal characters that all humans know innately. Would the leader be considered a separate archetype from the hero, or is it just a manifestation of the hero? Analytical psychology breaks down the boundaries between ancient man, “to whom symbols seem a natural part of everyday life, and modern man, for whom symbols are apparently meaningless and irrelevant” (Cowden, p. 98). The hero myth and the hero archetype is one of the most well known in the world. We can find them in our most ancient texts to the blockbuster hits pumped out by Hollywood. “They have, that is to say, a universal pattern, even though they were developed by
groups or individuals without any direct cultural contact with each other” (Cowden, p. 101). The archetype of “hero” and the breakdown of “heroic archetypes” are two separate ideas. The hero archetype is the meta-narrative that contains the various heroic archetypes. By the same logic, “leader” and “leadership archetypes” are two separate ideas that are connected. The meta-narrative that has been socially constructed to create the leader archetype is comprised of the various leadership archetypes that are found in the numerous discursive artifacts scattered across the landscape of leadership theory. Interestingly enough, the act of the hero and the leader is similar. They are both agents for change, for creation of the new and the destruction of the old. The hero is called the charismatic leader today, the “agent of change: someone who dispenses with what is previously accepted as given and challenges the existing understanding of values…. The charismatic is an idolized hero, a messiah and savior who appears in times of great distress. The salvation from distress is what therefore engenders the special emotional intensity of the charismatic response” (Charteris-Black, p. 16). The act of the hero and the act of the leader are the same, the messages may be different. The narratives surrounding heroes are mythic in nature and the narratives surrounding leaders are as well. The acts performed by these two archetypes has been written, talked about, and performed by humans, and has been analyzed, deconstructed and redefined countless times. We may call the narrative surrounding a hero an epic, a fairy-tale, or a fantasy, while calling the narrative surrounding a leader a theory, an approach, or an outlook. The mythic material surrounding the act is the same, binding the discourses together. The telling of the story and the interpretation by the seers and the mystics is what is
different. “Leadership is not about personality; it’s about practice” (Kouzes, p. 26), and the practice directly relates to the agency and purpose of the leader.

**Purpose of Leadership**

So what then is the purpose of leadership? The grammatically constructed definition of leadership states that leaders give direction and guidance on how to execute action and manage behavior within a culture’s ideological constraints. Culbertson (1993) outlines two leadership purposes; first, group-maintenance and second, task-achievement. The first is meant to build and maintain morale and support. Group maintenance is the human-relations aspect of leadership. The task achievement function is associated with group goal attainment (Culbertson, 1993, p. 26). Here leaders lead in order to keep a group together and in order to achieve a goal. Northouse considers leadership to be a “process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, p. 3). The keys to leadership here are group cohesion and goal management. Leadership is about influencing the behavior of those being led (Harter, p. 25). When one performs leadership effectively, a leader successfully “integrates the achievement of transactional objectives with more relational aspects of workplace interaction” using discursive strategies (Holmes, p. 31). These views on leadership purpose integrate two main concepts. First is organizational coherence/guidance and the second is linked to realizing organizational vision and purpose. Leadership then is a form
of social influence, embodied between a leader and his/her followers. A leader’s purpose is to influence followers to behave in ways that promote goal completion.

Purpose of Heroism

What is the purpose of being a hero? Hero myths were traditionally stories about divine individuals. Mortals or non-divine individuals technically are legends, but the words have been used synonymously. These stories changed humans into gods by attributing them divine qualities that made them more than just mortal. "The qualities can range from physical attributes - strength, size, looks - to intangible ones - intelligence, drive, integrity" (Segal, 2000, p. 7). In this way the hero became a god among men, something to idolize and worship. The bridge between the divine and the world became blurred with heroes. These heroic qualities would be magnified extravagantly in order to portray to the point of divinity. Modern heroes are different from traditional heroes. "Far from divine, the contemporary hero is hopelessly human - mortal, powerless, amoral...persistence replaces success, survival replaces achievement. Old-fashioned heroic virtues like courage and duty give way to new ones like irony and detachment" (Segal, 2000, p. 9).

Again, what is the purpose of being a hero? Heroes across all times are personifications of virtues and are celebrated even when the historical accuracy of the narrative comes into question. Heroes cross the border between reality and fantasy, between here and there, between subjectivity and objectivity, between the inner world of
self and the outer world of other (Segal, 2000, p. 10). "They act as 'transitional objects' linking the one domain to the other. The need for them is never outgrown" (Segal, 2000, p. 10). While early heroes were considered part and parcel of the sacred domain, the supernatural nature of the hero no longer became necessary.

Robert A. Segal examines Otto Rank, Joseph Campbell, Lord Raglan and Rene Girard's views of hero's in detail. "For Rank, heroes are heroic because they dare to serve themselves. For both Campbell and Raglan, heroes are heroic because they willingly or unwillingly serve their communities. For Raglan, heroes in myth serve their communities by their victories over those who threaten their people's physical welfare" (Segal, 2000, p. 25). Heroes are ideal kings, who bring boons to mankind. The actor is a king, and the scene the hero lives in is dual in nature.

The hero who lives in the mundane world has to travel out of it. In act one of the performance, the hero lives in the ordinary world, but has to leave it for one reason or another. The hero separates himself out of the world, traveling to the realm of the supernatural in order to gain power. The hero has to remove himself from the mundane world of the people around him, in essence die to the world in order to bring back power. The hero can travel physically to a new location, spiritually, or even within himself find the power. This power can manifest in many ways: It can be knowledge, a weapon, willpower, anything can be brought back as long as it has the power to change the world. The hero then comes back to the mundane land of humanity, and shares what he has brought back from the supernatural realm. This item is the catalyst for change in the
world, sparking a destruction of the old ways and creation of a new order. Change happens because of the hero and the power that he has found.

The agent of heroism, “the hero… is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such as one’s visions, ideas, and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. The hero has died as a modern man; but as an eternal man – perfected, unspecific, universal man – he has been reborn. His second solemn task and deed therefore is to return then to us transfigured, and teach the lessons he has learned of life renewed” (Campbell, 1973, p. 20).

A hero’s purpose is to bring new meaning into the world and then change the world in some way. By taking the heroes journey the hero leaves the world and comes back able to change it in ways beyond imagination. A hero is meant to be a legendary icon, a role model for human behavior. Heroes are the symbolic expression of change in some way. Each archetype of a hero represents a separate purpose linked to change. Carol S. Pearson (1991) assigns a goal, fear, response to problem, task, and gift to the world. For example the warrior archetype’s goal is to win, get its own way, and make a difference through struggle. His fears are weakness, powerlessness, impotence, and ineptitude. His response to problems is to slay, defeat, or convert the problem to the hero’s side. The warrior hero’s task is to fight for what really matters. Once the hero lives through the hero’s journey, his gift to the world is courage, discipline and skill that
is passed on to others. Another example is the Sage archetype. His goal is truth and understanding and he fears deception and illusion. His response to problems is to study, understand and transcend them. His task is the attainment of knowledge, wisdom, and enlightenment. His gift to man is skepticism in the status quo, wisdom, and nonattachment to doxic knowledge. Pearson also explains that the hero manifests depending on the life issue at hand. The hero emerges when there is a purpose begging for attention. When security is an issue, the innocent and the orphan archetypes emerge. Identity issues bring forth the seeker and lover archetypes, responsibility issues bring out the warrior and caregiver archetype, authenticity brings the destroyer and the creator, power the magician and ruler, and finally freedom issues bring out the sage and the fool (Pearson, 1998, p. 239). A different type of hero is needed for each purpose, and the story may be different for each hero.

Dramatic Codes

I turn now to semiotics in order to showcase the key signs that point us to what leadership and heroism practices are. Structuralists “…seek out the system of codes that they believe convey a texts meaning” (Bressler, 2007, p. 110) and aim at finding meaning by studying signs and the inter-textual systems that relate them. Semiotics is a branch of structuralism that studies the signs and codes that govern human social and cultural practices, including communication. Semiotics is a structured linguistic approach to cultural phenomena that aims to find meaning by examining the “system (langue)
whereby texts relate to each other, not an examination of an isolated text (parole)” (Bressler, 2007, p. 109). Semiotics gives us a way to take large discourses and isolate the recurrent themes and specific ideas that pervade them. In semiotics we reduce discourse into usable signs and codes that can be then interpreted in light of one another.

When we look at heroism and leadership, we find many themes and ideas that define what it means to be a hero or a leader. If we take each theory on its own, they portray an isolated view of the whole. On the other hand, if we look at discourses as codification system, or “signifying order” — “the system of signs, the codes into which they cohere…and the texts these codes allow human beings to construct” (Danesi, 2007, p. 291), we can then examine each theory as a symbolic system that can be broken apart, bracketed, and then re-textualized to incorporate new meaning.

Traditional macrosemiotic analysis aims to analyze signs in terms of their dimensionality; namely iconicity (sign in which the signifier has a direct connection), indexicality (sign in which the signifier has an existential connection), and symbolicity (sign in which the signifier has an arbitrary connection). One would first observe the sign and reflect upon it, then reduce and bracket the sign and its connection to the world and culture. Lastly, one would re-assess the sign, where the signified is the signification. For example we could watch the movie Superman and read a Batman comic book and use them as textual sources. First, we would assess that Superman is a hero, and so is Batman and isolate the signs found within movie/comic book. Then we would assess the various signifiers found: the iconic hero could be signified as the actual person Superman/Batman and studied deeply. Indexicaly we could examine Batman’s bat
signal, or the S on Superman’s uniform that both point to the existential relationship of the hero to the world. The word “Superman” or word “Batman” could be studied to see its symbolic connection to the idea of a hero. We would then examine how the signifiers and their signifers relate to at a linguistic level and how they interrelate to one another.

While this sort of semiotic analysis aims at finding meaning of a sign and its relationship to culture, I am aiming to look at discourse to examine what signs are related within it and use those signs to point us towards performing human action. It is not enough to just search through and see the signs are there and that they have intertextual relations, we have to be able to put it to use and make it accessible. Instead of just studying the nature of the signs, I aim to relate them to perform action so that we may embody them and perform them in everyday life. What I aim to do is to expose the signs of heroism and leadership and show how they interrelate on a dramatic level. Instead of searching through a sign and reducing it to its iconic, indexical, and symbolic forms, I aim to see the intertextual dramatic nature of the signs. Again, the main point of macrosemiotic analysis is to study the “ways in which a signifying order is both implanted in certain meaning structures and produces meaning within them” (Danesi & Perron, 1999, p. 293). My aim is expose the meaning structures that have been embedded within culture, and expose the relationship that they have to human action so that we may reproduce them. Traditional semiotic analysis gives us the groundwork for reducing signs and the vocabulary to craft new meaning, but it gets caught in the tangled web of meaning each sign may have, never lending to daily use beyond the signs themselves.
To make semiotics pragmatic and leadership/heroism accessible to people today, we have to narrow our field as to what a certain sign’s meaning is related to. This is where Kenneth Burke’s Dramatic Pentad comes in. The pentad allows for a very structured and narrow meaning to be associated with signs. The signs automatically are put in the light of performance. Instead of exposing the various signs and symbols that are associated with a symbolic-order, we humanize it. Dramatism as a framework for semiotics puts inherent meaning on how we as humans enact discourse. The signs and symbols become useful not just as a theoretical tool, but as a commissionable one.

Reducing the discourses on its own allows us to highlight the individual practices, but Dramatism allows us to use them.

Kenneth Burke defines rhetoric as “the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents” (Burke, p. 41). Dramatic analysis searches for the meaning of human motivation by analyzing the lived drama of human life. To Burke, “all life is drama…[and]…dramas feature human motives” (Jasinski, 2001, p. 266). The job is to uncover how the symbolic order is structured and how the views of reality construct individual motives. The pentad is a tool that Burke uses to discover the motive of the rhetorical artifact. “Burke asserts that by inspecting a rhetor’s work, ‘we or he may disclose by objective citation the structure of motivation operating here’” (Foss, 2002, p. 200). The motives are described in artifacts using the five basic elements of drama. These elements are the act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose that constitute a grammar of motives. The five dramatic elements of a rhetorical artifact is the basis of dramatic analysis. The act describes the major actions that take place in a
discourse. The agent is the person, or thing that performs the action. The Agency is the means in which the agent performs the action. The scene is the rhetorical situation which includes the ground, the location, and all of the setting. Lastly, the purpose is the why of the discourse, what the agent intends to accomplish by performing an act. (Foss, 1988, p. 339).

Burke’s work focused mainly on searching for motive within speech-acts. Normally one would take a singular speech, or a singular point of reference to criticize, and apply the pentad to analyze it. Every artifact within a discourse can be analyzed for motive; on the meta-level it is the sum total of the individual relationships between each analyzed artifact that would make up a sort of “grand-motive.” To dissect and analyze the infinite permutations of thought and definition within each discourse would take years, if not decades. Add to this that the data within the discourses are not necessarily speech-acts themselves, but speech-acts about speech-acts, it creates another abstraction layer that clouds the search for motive. To further problematize the motive, there is no explicit way to understand the motives of individuals who are unavailable to question. How can we question and find the motives behind someone truly without communicating directly with them? We cannot.

This study aims to understand the discursive nature of leadership and heroism (rather than a specific act). Since I have many narratives, I feel that the pentad can be adapted to allow for us to structuralize the two discourses; to give us a framework for understanding it in terms of the various ways that we as humans may perform leadership and heroism. Burke’s framework gives us a tool to frame and understand the two
phenomena. Instead of searching directly for the rhetors motive of each speech act we must orient ourselves into this study. Burke’s motivic focus does not lend to our understanding directly to the discursive and communicative nature of leadership and heroism.

The figures below are what I have found to be the quintessential codes that have emerged out of the discourses outlined in the previous chapters. The codes allow us to better frame and understand the essence of leadership and heroism. They are not arbitrary choices; each axiom is my own personal interpretation of prominent signs found in the discourses. Reflexively speaking, if someone else were to study the same texts leadership and heroism they might have come out with different signs/symbols. I have chosen to showcase these semiotic signs and codes because I feel that they are prominent ideas that pervade the discourses and give us a solid grounding in the theoretical material that defines heroism and leadership. This would be an organic relationally constructed definition of leadership and heroism, one that aims to find the essence of the discourses.¹

The themes below have been framed within Kenneth Burke’s dramatic pentad to show how leadership and heroism are performed. It is important to note the fact that the emergence of these specific “themes” is mediated by my own pre-existing analytical lens. It is also important to note that it is impossible to include each and every theory or subject matter. This analysis focuses its lens on the studied material that is present in this

¹ Before I continue I want to address the words of “heroism,” “hero, “leadership,” and “leader.” From a discursive standpoint, the words heroism and leadership signify everything found below in the structural reduction. From a linguistic standpoint, heroism denotes the act that heroes perform, and leadership denotes the act that leaders perform. This split usage of the word is inherently ambiguous. When we talk about leadership and heroism we may be talking about the act the actors do, or talk about everything within the discourse.
document and is by no means comprehensive. There are an infinite number of other signs that relate to heroic leadership, leadership, and heroism. Still, compiling a short list of signs can provide us with a better understanding of the concepts.

Figure. 3.1 breaks down the concept of heroic leadership as it is described in discourse. This is the heroic leadership that correlates very closely with the “great-man” idea of leadership and charismatic leadership.

Figure 3.1 - Reduction of Heroic Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates exceptional talents consistently</td>
<td>• The “Great Man”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Display high self-confidence</td>
<td>• Thinks positively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate competence, and expertise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engage in effective argumentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unconventional and counter normative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Takes risks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Builds trust and respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Takes care of subordinates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Puts duty in front of self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leads from the front lines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extraordinarily talented (borders on supernatural)</td>
<td>• A crisis situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong power needs</td>
<td>• An unstable situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visionary</td>
<td>• An organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agent of influence and inspiration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An individual with absolute integrity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Honest/Truthful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extraordinarily committed to the job, vision, organization, and followers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledgeable in the field they are leading in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheer force of personality - charisma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate high expectations and syncs them across the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create transcendent goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creates and communicates shared vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appeal to followers on shared beliefs, values, and goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uses communication persuasion techniques to motivate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• A battle or warzone situation/combat zone
• From the front lines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Promote Good of themselves and followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Serve as role model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide a unique and attainable vision for followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transform followers into leaders themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 are synthesized reductions containing major structural elements that have emerged from the discursive material in Chapter 2 regarding leadership and heroism.

**Figure 3.2 - Reduction of Leadership Discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Give direction and guidance on how to execute action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manage behavior within the culture's ideological constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintain harmony within a team or community of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perform transactional behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scene</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.3 - Reduction of Heroism Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Perform a brave, noble, or courageous action</td>
<td>• Creating something new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating something new</td>
<td>• Codify belief to be easily accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Codify belief to be easily accessible</td>
<td>• Make change in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make change in the world</td>
<td>• Go above and beyond the requirements of the situation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A human being</td>
<td>• heroic Qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Admired by other human beings</td>
<td>• A model for ideal human behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A model for ideal human behavior</td>
<td>• A relatable and believable character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A relatable and believable character</td>
<td>• Embody the virtues of the society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Embody the virtues of the society</td>
<td>• Bringer of change into the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bringer of change into the world</td>
<td>• The various archetypes of the hero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The various archetypes of the hero</td>
<td>• Embodiment of cultural axiology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Meaning is found for followers in the narrative acts of the life of the hero</td>
<td>• Identification with the character</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Live the heroic journey  
| Tap into shared character archetypes  
| Interaction with human and gods  
| The legend of the individual shares meaning |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| In the world of the mundane and natural, then the supernatural and sacred, then back to the world of the human  
| The journey of the hero cycle/mono myth  
| Varied situation – the area may change but the story remains similar  
| Liminal space |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bring new meaning into the world  
| Change the world in some meaningful way -kill a dragon, right a wrong, become king etc. |
Chapter 4: Crafting Heroic Leaders - Semiotic Meaning through Mythic Construction

First Order Semiotic Systems – Crafting Signs of Heroes and Leaders

The “great man” narrative in heroic leadership does not take into account the totality of modern day ideas of heroism and leadership. In this chapter my aim is to redraft the narrative in a way that makes it accessible for individuals to perform. In essence, we have to remake the accepted myth of heroic leadership to include other avenues of leadership and heroism. In order to do this, I turn to semiotics to associate the meaning of various terms in order to include new definitions of heroism and leadership.

Ferdinand de Saussure was the father of modern semiotics and structuralism. Saussure explains that what defines a word is not what it relates to but instead what it does not relate to. Signs are known by what they are not. Also a sign can be broken into two parts: the signified and the signifier. The signified is the concept or idea and the signifier is the item that represents it. The relationship between signified and signifier is arbitrary. "There are only conventional relations between words and meanings. There is nothing in nature nor in logic that requires that English speakers use the word ‘dog’ for dogs" (Palmer, p. 19). We can in essence replace the sound of any word to any other thing. Saussure also explains that there are synchronic and diachronic studies of language. Synchronic study of language is examining the relations between "the different parts of a linguistic system at any given moment in time, without reference to the past...the latter is the study of the evolution of language, of history's impact on linguistic
events” (Palmer, p. 23). Structuralism at its core can be called the study of languages structure. When we look at a sentence we can see that we can substitute words horizontally or vertically. "The horizontal substitutions are syntagmatic (elements can be replaced in the sentence order itself) the vertical substitutions are paradigmatic (the words themselves can be replaced by other words)” (Palmer, p. 24). When we think of an idea we understand it based on the negations of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic. We come to know leadership and Heroism by what it is not, and only through what is not can we come to find what it “is.”

Each point in the structural reduction found in Chapter Four are signs. “Aristotle defined the sign as consisting of three dimensions: (1) the physical part of the sign itself (e.g. the sounds that make up a word such as red); (2) the referent to which it calls attention (a certain category of color), (3) its evocation of a meaning (what the referent entails psychologically and socially)” (Danesi & Perron, p. 42). Let’s look at Saussure’s sign model in detail (Figure 4.1) (Palmer, p. 43).

Figure 4.1 - Saussure’s sign (model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[3] Sign (associative total)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As an example, we can think of the signifier being an icon/picture of a tall leafy green plant with a brown trunk and large roots. The signified is the idea of “tree.” The associative total is the image of a tree with the meaning associated.

Using Saussure’s model of the sign, one can see how various behavior creates the symbolic system surrounding leaders and heroes. Here is an example (Figure 4.2):

**Figure 4.2 - Saussure's model applied**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[3] A leader (associative total)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, co-worker A. gives advice to coworker B on how to manage their time better in the workplace. The act of giving advice can be considered a leadership act, and coworker A can be seen as a leader (Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.3 – Woman leader**

Here picture a woman walking into a business and being ushered into the office of the CEO. This woman can be associated with leadership by virtue of the context that she is placed in. She is meeting with another established leader and can be viewed as a leader by virtue of the scene she is in (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 – Hero dog

| [3] A hero (associative total) |

Imagine a dog running into a burning building, only to come out pulling its master out alive. The dog is performing an act of heroism, and can be considered a hero. Next let’s look at a singer on American Idol (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5 – Singer on American Idol

Picture a singer on American idol (Figure 4.5). This singer is admired by countless people on TV. Since the public admires the singers (a heroic process), the singer is elevated to heroic status.

The Saussurean model of a sign (Figure 4.1) is a first order meaning making system that humans use to represent reality. The relationship between the signifier again can be iconic, indexical, or symbolic in nature. Icons have a direct simulative connection between signifier and signified. Indexes have an existential connection within time and space between signifier and signified. Symbols have an arbitrary metaphorical connection between signifier and signified. These elaborations to the sign were introduced by the American pragmatist Charles Sanders Pierce. These signs are mostly indexical and symbolic in nature, meaning they point to the presence of something in the world or that they may have an abstract, arbitrary connection to the signified. For example, the culturally accepted traits of a leader are indexical of being the agent of leadership. In the same vein, being the bringer of change in the world is indexical to being the agent of heroism. Symbolic manifestations in the discourse are harder to examine. For example, when a follower finds meaning in the narrative acts in the life of a hero they may relate them symbolically to the agency of how heroism is done.

Each signifier can have multiple signifieds, and many of those signifieds fall outside of the accepted rhetoric that is formulated within a discourse. Each pentatomic element can be considered a sign within itself, with a signifier and a signified. The same can be said about the structural elements. The various combinations of these elements constitute our understanding of Heroism and leadership.
Interestingly enough the iconic representations of heroes and leaders do not translate well into a reduction of the discourses. Individual, “real person,” leaders and heroes become overshadowed by the meta-narrative that they are enveloped in. The icons are talked about as indexes and symbols, the agent of leadership and heroism is the starting point of the discursive journey. Studies relate back to the activities an individual performs. The agent it would seem is imbalanced compared to the other pentadic elements because it is the source of analysis for many of the theories. The embodied individual performs the act, within the scene, and does something for some reason. Leadership and heroism are both grounded in the life world of the human.

The father of structuralism as a methodology was Claude Levi-Strauss. He was looking for universals, the "synthetic 'a priori' truths (universal truths that make perceptual truths possible but could not themselves be perceptual truths). Levi-Strauss's vision of myth language is colored by his claim that “universal human truths exist at the level of structure, but are camouflaged at the end of observable fact unless one knows how to decode these facts” (Palmer, p. 31). He outlines a three step process to understanding cultural systems. First we have to define the phenomena. Second we have to create a table of all the different ways that the phenomena can be related. Lastly we can then use this table of relations as an object of study. To Levi-Strauss when we are conscious we perceive the world around us. Unconsciously, we perceive relationships between the objects that our conscious mind perceives. To Levi-Strauss, humans constantly examine relationships and are looking at how one thing relates to another
thing. What is leadership? Who/what is heroism? Structuralism, empiricism, and the understanding of cultural semiotics is a good starting point to answer these questions.

**Second Order Semiotic Systems – Crafting Heroic Leaders**

Roland Barthes did not view semiotics as a tool to explain the essential nature of a sign the way Levi-Strauss did. "Essentialism is a belief in the priority of 'essences.' An essence would be something like a Platonic Form - a definition, a formula, a set of characteristics that stabilizes objects in the world" (Palmer, p. 51). Palmer gives the example of a triangle. All triangles have "triangularity" in common. That is their essence. On the other hand all humans have something in common, and this essence is humanity. Jean-Paul Sarte said that "existence precedes essence" (Palmer, p. 42) and Barthes goes past this in saying there are no essences at all. Instead, the idea of having a perfect form is a nonsequitor. To even try to create a definite definition of something in the world is a moot point. To Barthes, there are no facts, or anything for that matter, except for signs and the encoding and decoding systems that bind them.

To Barthes, myths are "a form of discourse that tries to make cultural norms appear as facts of nature. Barthes demythologizes mythic narratives by revealing the semiological codes that myths employ" (Palmer, p. 56). With this in mind the sign (which is signifier over signified) can then become the new signifier in a completely new matrix, where the original sign loses its meaning. This juxtaposition of meaning can be endless and the true meaning of the first sign is destroyed or distorted. A text then can
have multiple meanings and the more meanings there are the better. There can be no fixed meanings to anything because the sign can always be a signifier within another sign system.

Jacques Lacan introduces the ideas of metaphor, syntagam and metonomy. These are extensions of Roman Jackobsin's linguistics. In structuralism again we try to look for the universal structures that are the same for everyone. Lacan introduces the idea that context can transform what the signifier means. The "sliding signifier" can slip new meaning into a preexisting semiotic case. An example of this would be in the movie Borat...just by adding the word "not" to the end of the sentence we completely change the meaning structure of the sentence. "The result is the general instability of meaning. For, relative to the signifier, the signified also slides" (Palmer, p. 71). What is real is mediated by language and we can never accurately portray what is real. "No word carries any meaning, or each word carries all meaning, and communication (i.e., intersubjectivity) is impossible" (Palmer, p. 75). Lacan breaks up the way the world is into the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. Not too much can be said about the real because it is experiential. It is the way we see the world before we try to represent it with symbols. It is how we see the chair before we know that it is a chair, or how we see the moon before we attach meaning to it. Once we have language the "real" is lost and we enter the imaginary. Here we treat the objects we see as if they are real instead of treating them as the symbolic representations of the real. The realm of the symbolic then is to order our existence and to provide a repository of meaning that we can assign to the world. The question then becomes whether we can find the difference between subject
and object. Language gives us the tools to be able to do this by giving us access to the symbolic realm. Here is Barthes’ myth model (Figure 4.6) (Palmer, p. 45).

**Figure 4.6 – Barthes’ myth (model)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[3] Sign (associative total)</td>
<td>{II}SIGNIFIED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{I} SIGNIFIER (form)</td>
<td>(concept)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{III} SIGN (signification)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barthes uses an example of a black soldier saluting. This signifier signifies fidelity to France and love of one’s country. When one looks at the sign, one would see a faithful black soldier. Myth then applies a secondary meaning system on top of this sign of the faithful black soldier. The soldier would be considered a signifier in a meta-semiotic system in which its signified would be that France is a great empire where all “her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully server under her flag” (Palmer, 2007, p. 58). Under this mythic system we see the picture of the faithful black soldier not of what it is, but instead as an image representing the naturalized ideology of colonialism and imperialism. The sign has been robbed of its signified and instead new meaning has been attached. The artifact, so innocent in its presentation now represents a strict view of reality, of how things were, how things are, and how things will come to be.
In this model, the first order sign is robbed of its original meaning, emptied and mangled by being placed in a second order semiotic system. This is meta-language, or language that speaks about the first. The discursive material surrounding leadership and heroism consists of this meta-language, talking about the talk, creating meaning through linguistics and the various myths about leaders and heroes. The structural elements found in Chapter Two are actually representations of talk, or myths about talk. The original behavior is taken, and then turned into myth by associating a second order system to it (leadership or heroism). In doing so, the original behavioral signs take on new meaning. The second order meaning system introduced by the talk-about-talk takes these multifaceted symbolic concepts, reduces them into easy to understand axioms, and portrays them as cultural norms. Barthes semiotic analysis methodology explains how signs become mythic. “Barthes demythologizes by revealing the semiological codes that myths employ” (Palmer, p. 56).

Leadership and heroism does not start with the axioms developed in Chapter Four, instead they start with the actual embodied practices that human beings do. These squares are formed from the talk-about-talk, the narratives and theories that describe leadership and heroic behavior. They are descriptive of the discursive practices, but not the discourses in practice. They are actually mythic in nature because they are based on talk-about-talk. Only when we start to talk about the actions, in essence put them within a new semiological framework, are leadership and heroism born.
In this example (Figure 4.7), coworker A is empathizing with coworker B over being yelled at by their boss. This is a relationship building behavior that signifies that co-worker A is trying to achieve a relationally oriented goal in the workplace. This relationally oriented goal can then be viewed directly as a purpose of leadership, and therefore the original signifier (empathizing with a co-worker) can now be viewed as a leadership behavior. Co-worker A is enacting a form of leadership and is now a leader in a mythic sense.

The great-man version of heroic leadership is a useful model in that it describes a very straightforward way to act. When we re-invent heroic leadership using the basic ideas found in both discourses on the other hand, we gain a new type of heroic leadership
that extends the traditional heroic leadership, one that is not dependent on just an individual “great-man,” or traditional styles of charismatic leadership techniques. In this chapter my aim is to describe a new myth that integrates the ideology and myth of both heroism and leadership, and show how this new dramatic dimension of heroic leadership may be seen in the real world.

In order to craft a new meaning for heroic leadership that incorporates the drama found in leadership and heroic discourse, I feel that we must start with the embodied human, the actor who performs in the world. Two concepts emerge that integrate the agent of leadership and heroism (Figure 4.8):

Figure 4.8 - The leadership-heroism (model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[3] leader-hero (associative total)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An established hero is associated with the discursive act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose of leadership. The new sign is the leader-hero (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9 – Heroic leadership (model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[1] A leader [formulated]</th>
<th>[2] heroism [act, agent, agency,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
An established leader is associated with the discursive act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose of heroism. The new sign is the heroic leader. Of course, these concepts are encased within myth as they are concepts formed from two discourses, and then talked about. The concept of the heroic leader and the leader-hero is encased in myth.

Let’s look at how we can apply this model (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10 – Application of heroic leadership

| [1] The marketing team on floor two who bring in 30% additional revenue [form] | [2] A network of individuals (leadership agent), who achieve organizational transactional goals (leadership purpose) [concept] |
| [3][1] A network of leaders (form) | [II] CEO praises them as a model for ideal human behavior (heroism-agent) |
In this example (Figure 4.10) the marketing department brings in 30% additional revenue than projected for the quarter. This network can be considered a leadership agent that is achieving organizational goals. They are a network of leaders in their business. The CEO then notices their good work, and praises them by giving them bonuses and telling everyone at the workplace and outside of the workplace how amazing they are. They become ideals for human behavior in the workplace and are elevated to heroic status.

Figure 4.11 - Application of heroic leadership

| [1] Teach villagers how to make a better fertilizer for their fields (signifier) | [2] Create new meaning in the world (heroic Act) (1st order signified) |
| [3] {1} A hero (1st order sign/2nd order signifier) | {II} Give direction and guidance to a community (leadership Act) (2nd order signified) |
| {III}{1} A leader-hero (2nd order sign/3rd order signifier) |
In this case (Figure 4.11), a person comes to town and teaches villagers how to create a better fertilizer for their fields to grow crops. This act is seen as heroic by the villagers as this is new meaning added to their world. The individual is seen as a hero, but others also view the hero as a leader because the person gave direction and guidance to the community, which is associated with a leadership act. The individual becomes a leader-hero.

The semiotic tree (Figure 5.1) that makes up the myth of heroic leadership. I feel that speculation into the nature of heroic leadership is important in understanding this new concept. Whether or not the nature of a heroic leader is portrayed correctly here requires further research outside of the thesis presented here. When the dramatic material presented by leadership discourse is directly associated with the dramatic material presented within the heroism discourse a direct ratio of meaning is applied. For example (Figure 4.12):

Figure 4.12 – Heroic leadership – (meta model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[3] Heroic Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let’s take the first leadership act presented in Chapter four; to manage behavior within a culture’s ideological constraints. We can take this concept and re-associate it with heroism, showing the act signifies the new myth of heroic leadership. Some signifieds work better than others because of the metaphorical connection that grounds narratives. Metaphor is defined “traditionally as the use of a word or phrase denoting one kind of idea or object in place of another word or phrase for the purpose of suggesting a likeness between the two” (Danesi & Perron, p. 162). Part of the basis of myth is found in the analogical function of metaphor. “Analogy is an inductive form of reasoning that asserts that if two or more entities are similar in one or more aspects, then a probability exists that they will be similar in other respects” (Danesi & Perron, p. 165). The basis of comparison within the semiological system is the conceptual metaphor “This is that” or “these are these” or “this represents that.” The human imagination connects the dots and creates the mapping between the concepts. “Metaphorical codes are powerful shapers of worldview because they are so understandable. They make thinking easy. They are automatic, effortless, and established by community consensus. More often than not, they are guides to a cultures past” (Danesi & Perron, p. 165). They tie concepts to each other.

There are numerous one-to-one relationships between leadership and heroism that can create the myth of heroic leadership. The conceptual metaphor of “this is that” may not always work well. In the below example (Figure 4.13), the leadership act is the heroic act. The conceptual metaphor is “Act is Act”: 
Figure 4.13 - Heroic leadership – meta model applied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[1] Leadership Act:</th>
<th>Manage behavior within a culture’s ideological constraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[2] Heroism Act:</td>
<td>Make change in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3] Heroic leadership Act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acting within the prescribed ways accepted by a culture is associated with making change in the world. The two ideas do not mesh very well and creates a myth that doesn’t work.

Let’s look at an example where it is not so readily apparent (Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14 - Meta-myth of heroic leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[1] Leadership Act:</th>
<th>Manage behavior within a culture’s ideological constraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[2] Heroism Agent:</td>
<td>Embody the virtues of the society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3] Heroic leadership Act/Agent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this example (Figure 4.14), the act of managing follower’s behaviors is related to embodying the virtues of the society. This creates an act/agent myth. Here the act itself is the embodied hero himself. The act is the person and the person represents the virtues of the society. It is a myth within a myth creating another myth. “Act is Agent,” doing something in the world represents the character of a hero. The metaphoric connection is still there.

Not all semiotic metaphors are equal. Some create stronger connections and some create weaker connections than others. Let’s take another example using a different starting point of leadership and relate it to heroism to create another view of heroic leadership (Figure 4.15).

**Figure 4.15 - Meta-myth of heroic leadership**

| [1] A CEO who is very charismatic (leadership agent + agency) | [2] Heroism Agency: Goes above the requirements of the situation |
| [3] Heroic leader Agent/Agency |

In this example, a charismatic CEO is portrayed to others as someone who goes above and beyond the call of duty. The CEO is instantly seen as a hero because they are
related to the myth. If we were to replace the CEO with a group, the same thing would occur.

The organization scene and the interpersonal dynamic of being situated with followers represent how individuals tap into a shared archetype. For me, this connection does not work as well as the previous ones. “Scene is Agency” seems to create a very weak argument for heroic leadership but nonetheless, it still is a valid construct mythically connecting the two discourses.

I feel that the strength of the argument is not the important issue at hand, instead it is the fact that we can create this metaphoric connection between two unlike objects and somewhere someone will find personal meaning in it.

Each relationship between leadership and heroism creates a new unique mythic structure that creates heroic leadership.

Examples of Heroic Leadership

Let’s look now to a few examples of how heroic leadership can be seen in action.

The Arab Spring revolts are good example (Figure 4.16) of heroic leadership in action. The Arab Spring was a series of demonstrations and protests that flooded the Arab world forcing leaders from power in places such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Tunisia. The civil struggle involved strikes, demonstrations, marches and rallies, in various cities. Also, a wide variety of social media was used in order to communicate and help spread information so that individuals and groups could mobilize.
The revolt was a leaderless revolution that took place in a digital age, but it created heroes on a local scale. Bloggers and people who were willing to take movies became instant heroes who supplied an important commodity, the commodity of information. “In previous generations, information would stop with an individual or a small group of individuals. Then with the two most recent generations, information became an elitist tool, controlled by corporations and sensationalized big-media. Now, a person can post online and make the information viral, sparking discussions and generating opinion commentary” (Shah, 2011, p. 35). The bloggers, videographers, twitter users, all were performing an aspect of heroic leadership, even though the collective movement did not have a traditional charismatic heroic-leader. They were performing heroic leadership as a collective instead of following a charismatic figure who led the revolution. Each and every person who participated became a heroic leader in the new sense of the term. Here is an example (Figure 4.16):

Figure 4.16 – Blogger during Arab Spring

| Blog the protests and share information on what is happening to other people while in a dangerous area. | Try to spread the word of protestors (leadership-Act)/organizational goal of sharing information |
In this example (Figure 4.16) the blogger becomes an agent for change, a heroic leader by virtue of the semiotic association of his/her actions. It is the dramatic act of heroic leadership that the blogger performs, and he becomes a true heroic-leader, (not a charismatic heroic-leader).

Another real world example of a heroic leader would be Bradley Manning.

“Bradley Manning, a 24-year-old Army intelligence analyst, is accused of leaking a video showing the killing of civilians, including two Reuter’s journalists, by a US Apache helicopter crew in Iraq. He is also charged with sharing the documents known as the
Afghan War Diary, the Iraq War Logs, and embarrassing US diplomatic cables, with the anti-secrecy website WikiLeaks. The video and documents have illuminated such issues as the true number and cause of civilian casualties in Iraq, human rights abuses by U.S.-funded contractors and foreign militaries, and the role that spying and bribes play in international diplomacy” (Bradley Manning, 2012). Let’s look at how he could be perceived as one (Figure 4.17):

Figure 4.17 – Bradley Manning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commit treason by sharing government secrets that showcase human rights abuses by U.S. funded contractors.</th>
<th>Takes a risk (leadership-Act)/socially influences America with information (leadership-Act), Influences Behavior (leadership-Purpose)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Traitor who stood up for what he believed in</td>
<td>Perform a brave, courageous action (heroic-Act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An American hero who stood up for what he believed in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bradley Manning, through Barthes semiotic process (Figure 4.17), can be seen as a heroic-leader, an American hero who stood up for what he believed in. Another
example of a heroic leader would be Hillary Clinton during the primary elections of 2008. Clinton ran for president against Barak Obama and won more primaries than any other female candidate ever. She took a risk in running and performing leadership behaviors, but was seen as a hero by many individuals due to the fact that she pushed the gender boundaries in this country when it came to the presidential nomination. Hillary can be seen as a hero for her effort (Figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18 – Hillary Clinton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Run for president of the United States</th>
<th>Takes a risk (leadership-Act)/perform leadership behaviors+ and be charismatic (leadership-agency), situated with followers (leadership-Purpose)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American presidential nominee</td>
<td>Admired by other human beings (heroic agent), Try to break women’s glass ceiling, make changes in the world (heroic-Act),</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An heroic Woman who is running for president

Let’s take a look now at how heroic leadership works when an individual or group contributes to a community online. GIT (Git, 2013) is a distributed software development platform that allows for open source structured changes to code. In open source software design, any individual can download, edit, and upload new code to contribute to a project. These individuals can stay anonymous in some projects, while others require that people sign up and take accountability for their code. Groups also work together to contribute code, such as Google to the open source Android project.

When an individual or group contributes to an open source project, they are contributing to the goals of the organization they are contributing to and communicating with the group. This in turn designates them as an open source code contributor. This new sign can be associated with creating something new in the world, residing in the liminal space between the virtual and the actual, and bringing new meaning to the world. These are all associated with heroism and creates the new sign of the hero who writes code, creating new software for mankind (Figure 4.19).
Figure 4.19 – Open source code contribution as heroic leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide code to open source projects</th>
<th>Achievement of organizational transactional goals (leadership purpose), engage and communicate with others (leadership act)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open source code contributor</td>
<td>Create something new and make a change in the world (heroic act), Admired by other human beings (heroic agent), moves between the liminal space of our world and the virtual (heroic scene), Bring new meaning into the world (heroic purpose)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A heroic code contributor with a purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An another example (Figure 4.20), I want to turn the heroic leadership relationship around to portray a leadership heroism. In this case, heroism comes first and leadership after. The end result still is a semiotic association that joins heroism and leadership, but the outcome differs slightly. I present it as a contrast to heroic leadership to show what can occur when the rolls are switched. Aimee Mullins was born with fibular hemimelia and had to have her legs amputated below the knee when she was only one year old. Despite her disability, she has gone on to become a fashion model, an accomplished runner and athlete, and actress. She fights every day to be a model for all disabled individuals, and challenges the definitions of what it means to be disabled. She was also named as one of the fifty most beautiful people by People magazine. Mullins is seen as a hero to many, someone who brings change to the world and fights for equal opportunities for disabled individuals. While she can be considered a hero in many rights, Mullins has moved beyond heroism into a leadership role. She regularly talks at TED working towards giving guidance to scientists on how to create better and better prosthetics. She also uses her influence to get a message out there, that having a disability is an opportunity for change and growth, not a hindrance. She is a leader hero.

Figure 4.20 – Aimee Mullins/Prosthetic Legs

| Amputee/Disabled Individual who builds her own prosthetic legs | Perform a brave action, creates something new (heroic-Act), Creates new |
so that she (and other disabled individuals) can run

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>meaning in the world for disabled individuals and changes what it means to be disabled (heroic - purpose), Has heroic qualities, is a relatable and believable person and is the bringer of change in the world (heroic agent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>heroic woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A leader who is also a hero

Another example would be from the video “GoPro: Fireman Saves Kitten.” (Go Pro: Fireman, 2013)
In this video the perspective is from the viewpoint of a fireman. In the video he moves into a burnt building after a fire and finds a kitten who is on the verge of death. He evacuates the animal and proceeds to resuscitate it back to life.

The video opens with an image of the GoPro camera against a black background with the words GoPro Be a Hero. It is of the GoPro model Hero3. It then pans to a neighborhood with a firetruck and a member of the Fresno Fire Department holding cloth outside of a firetruck. The main fireman who is wearing the camera then enters a house that had a fire in it. With his flashlight he looks through the debris and remains of the house and eventually comes upon a still body of a small kitten. He then picks up the kitten and takes it outside through the smokey atmosphere. Using an oxygen tank and by pouring water on the kitten he proceeds to resuscitate the animal who then survives the ordeal. The video then pans back to the picture of the GoPro camera with the words GoPro Be a Hero underneath.

Dramatic Analysis.

Let’s now look at the various heroic leadership dramatic codes that can be applied so that we may craft this fireman as a heroic leader (Figure 4.21). In this video it is clear to see that the dramatic codes that surround heroic leadership as it stands today in the discourse is insufficient. The act of heroic leadership that the fireman is performing could be considered that he is demonstrating exceptional talents and that he is taking risks. He puts his duty in front of himself and leads from the front lines. The agent of the fireman is someone of influence and inspiration, as he is there to save and help. He is extraordinarily committed to his job and willing to work to save even a small helpless
kitten. Add to this that he is knowledgeable in the field. In terms of agency, we find very few codes of heroic leadership, but in the scene we find many. There is a crisis situation, an almost warzone or combat zone where the fireman is working. The purpose of heroic leadership for the fireman can be broken down as that he is trying to create positive change in the world.

Using the codes from leadership and heroism individually we find that the fireman’s leadership acts are to perform transactional behaviors, conduct and evoke action within oneself and others, and give direction and guidance on how to execute action (moral action in this case in that even a kitten should be saved) (Figure 4.21). His heroic agent is to perform a brave, noble, and courageous action, to make change in the world, and to go above and beyond the requirements of the situation. The leadership agent here is lacking a bit of meaning that relates directly, while the heroic agent on the other hand is filled with a lot of heroic codes; the fireman can be considered an individual with absolute integrity (as who else would save a small kitten on its deathbed), and someone who is extraordinarily talented. Leadership agency codes are lacking, while heroic codes are plentiful. We can identify with the character and live the journey of saving the kitten alongside him. In addition he is reaching into the realm of the gods, saving a life that would have died, something that traditionally was in the power of the supernatural in myth and legend. For leadership scene, we can see that the fireman is situated in a network of other fireman and is primarily positioned to help in this situation as he is on scene. Heroic scene can be construed by the fact that the fireman leaves the mundane world of the street and moves into a dark world of smoke and ash, only to
emerge back into the world of the human. Also there is an almost timeless quality to the scene as he walks in and everything is dark and ash. Leadership purpose can be the achievement of organizational goals (to save who you can) and heroic purpose can be considered to change the world in some meaningful way – to save a life.

With all of these codes, we can begin to craft new myths of heroic leadership that add meaning above and beyond the basic codes that we find in the current heroic leadership discourse. For example (Figure 4.21):

**Figure 4.21 – GoPro: Fireman Saves Kitten**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A fireman (Leadership-Agent)</th>
<th>Takes a risk - Enters a burning building to try to find survivors in a crisis situation (leadership-act and leadership-scene)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A fireman taking risks associated with his job at a burnt down house</td>
<td>A) Leaves the world of the mundane and the natural to enter the supernatural, then returns back to the world of the human (heroic-Scene)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B) Performs a brave, noble, or courageous action of saving the life of a helpless kitten (heroic-act)

A heroic fireman taking a risk to enter a world of ash and darkness and then returning to the world in order to courageously save the life of a helpless kitten.

Here we can see that new meaning based on the drama associated with heroism and leadership is directly defining through myth the definition of what it means to be a heroic leader. This individual is a heroic leader of ancient times, one who is doing something truly heroic. He is entering a world of ash to save a life. These are the types of meanings that can be created and integrated into heroic leadership discourse if we craft new myths about heroic leader applying the codes found in the discourses. The drama and myth associated with the discourses add new lenses for us to interpret heroic leaders.

Another video, “GoPro HD: Shotgun Barrels at Pipeline” is a great example of how heroic leadership in action.

In this video the perspective is from various surfers. They are all trying to catch the biggest wave and show off their skills using a GoPro camera, in essence trying to live up to the tagline of being a hero. The first thing we see is the GoPro camera and the tagline to “Be a Hero.” Then, the scene opens at dawn showing multiple surfers on the water. An individual comes out and tells us that it is “pretty powerful out there” and that
it is the “real deal finally.” Then a montage occurs of people surfing on incredible waves out in the middle of the ocean, being pounded back and forth in clear blue waters. As the video continues we see that many other surfers are out on the water trying to achieve the same goal, which is to catch a good wave and surf. The video continues with the surfers continuing to battle the ocean and eventually it closes with the view of the GoPro camera and the tagline.

These surfers probably aren’t considering themselves to be candidates for heroic leadership. In fact, there are only a few codes of heroic leadership that we can see directly apply to the behaviors that they are exhibiting in surfing. The act of heroic leadership can be seen clearly, that these surfers are demonstrating exceptional talents consistently, displaying competence and expertise, they are taking risks and are unconventional, and that they lead from the front lines. The agent of heroic leadership can be seen as these surfers are agents of influence and inspiration to other surfers as they hit the waves and also for those watching the video. They can be also considered knowledgeable in surfing and extraordinarily committed to the job as they came out pre-dawn to hit the big waves. The agency is a bit lacking here. They are using their skills to surf the waves. The heroic leadership-scene would be the front lines of the ocean, where the waves meet the see, a very unstable situation. As for purpose we can see that they want to perform for the good of themselves.

We can see more meaning when we look at the codes of leadership and heroism and how they apply to the video (Figure 4.22). Here the surfers are giving direction and guidance on how to surf big waves through the GoPro video and are conducting and
evoking action within themselves and others. For heroic action, the surfers are performing brave and courageous action and going above and beyond themselves and the situation. The leadership agent would be humans in the context of a network of surfers who are showing proper surfing behavior. For the heroic agent, these surfers have heroic qualities and are relatable and believable. There are not many codes that directly relate to heroic or leadership agency for the surfers. The leadership scene would be considered in an open network of other surfers, where those who are surfing are leaders and those who are watching are followers. The heroic scene would be out in a world away from the normal human world, in a battle against a supernatural force. For leadership purpose we can see that the surfers are trying to achieve transactional goals of surfing.

Let’s turn to our mythic model to see how we can find new meaning that adds to the discourse of heroic leadership for these surfers (Figure 4.22).

Figure 4.22 – GoPro HD: Shotgun Barrels at Pipeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A surfer (leadership-agent)</th>
<th>In a group with other surfers (leadership-agent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One surfer amongst many surfers</td>
<td>A) Battle against ocean, man against the force of nature to perform heroic and courageous action (heroic-act)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This new heroic leader is one who fights against the ocean, a never ending relentless battle. The surfer is small but is a part of a group. He and his comrades battle wave upon wave. This is a different type of heroic leadership than the one that we find traditionally in the discourse of heroic leadership. It is one that is stemmed in action and in the roots of drama.

From the examples above, we can see that there are many ways that heroic leadership is performed. We can craft our own myths, or we can look at the lives of people we know and find the heroism in the actions they perform. We can even look at our own lives and try to apply heroism to the various dramatic elements that come up in our lives. Taking care of the kids and driving them to soccer practice can be considered a heroic performance, not just a leadership act. Every action can be elevated to include an aspect of heroism into it.

By using myth and drama and the codes of heroism and leadership, we can easily craft new meaning into our lives that fill us with heroic leadership.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

In conclusion, this study has examined in depth what leadership and heroism are from mythic, semiotic, and communicative perspectives. Myth has the power to take a concept and reshape it in a way that seems natural to society. By examining the drama found in heroism and leadership, reducing it to basic axioms, and applying it in various ways we can create new meaning in the world, and craft new heroic leaders easily. The model below shows that if we take any leadership code and apply a heroic code to it, we craft new meaning for heroic leadership. This in turn invigorates heroic leadership and brings it back to its roots of drama and myth while bringing new meaning to people’s lives who choose to re-create themselves as heroic leaders.
In heroic leadership the original act of giving direction, guidance, performing relationally oriented behaviors, or transactional behaviors can be seen as brave, a change in the right direction. The actions no longer are seen as a ploy of social influence, but instead as heroic and noble. It is no longer just mundane, but an epic act. When the leader is considered a hero, he moves from being just a compendium of proper behavior in a culture, or the sum total of his skills and traits, into a model for human behavior. He becomes someone that can be admired, a shining beacon that embodies culture’s values and beliefs. A leader may lead through persuasion and by performing leadership behaviors in an interpersonal and group setting, but when he is seen through the lens of
heroism the leader’s identity transforms into the hero and audiences identify with the hero archetypes within the universal unconscious. The universal themes and the journey of the hero make him a relatable character, a person who starts in the world of the human (where the leader’s followers lie) but transcends this world to create new meaning in a different place. The leader interacts with creativity and comes back to share meaning with his followers. The organizational and transactional goals have new purpose, they are meant to change the world in a new way, while the story of the leader lives on as an example of ideal behavior within the world. This myth of heroic leadership promotes new ways to work, new lines for identification with audiences and new ways to influence behavior. It takes leadership out of the hands of man and into the hands of beings who go above and beyond the requirements of a situation. Heroic leadership takes leaders and immortalizes them, turning them into near gods.

What are the implications of using the model outlined in this paper to construct new heroic leaders? The topological model, when implemented in organization systems, adheres to an erasing of meaning to the character of a leader and reinvents them to match a supernatural being who brings forth the mandate of god. The morality of such a deception can be problematic, as the actions of the leader are not justified by real world meaning, but instead by the values of the supernatural. I feel that the stripping of meaning from personal action and attributing something completely different can open a host of problems, especially if the intent of the heroic leader or group that creates the mythos is negative. It is a dangerous game to re-assign meaning and to portray an
individual as a demi-god. Even if one was to try to perform as a heroic leader, the fact that there is a re-attribution of action and meaning creates an ethical dilemma.

This raises the question of whether or not we should use the myth of a heroic leader as a guide for human behavior and as a model of action. Should we use the myth to create new heroic leaders? I feel that unconsciously we already use the myth, and that it is fine to do so. In various situations the heroic leader that I have described above can be found enacted in various rhetorical situations.

Anyone can perform heroic leadership by integrating and embodying the various aspect of leadership act, agent, agency, scene or purpose. After internalizing and making leadership action their own, they need only apply heroic meaning to their initial drama and believing the myth to be true. In this way, heroic leadership can be accessible to everyone, not just the charismatic leaders or the transformational leaders that our original definition told us about.

We can also search out for examples of heroic leadership in the world, and apply the model to real situations that occur.

Future research may explore the two discourses in greater detail, outlining other perspectives on what leadership and heroism are. In addition, future research can explore the leader-hero, and leadership-heroism. Also, future research can try to find the heroic leader as performed by individuals in discourse, or can search narratives for the various layers of this myth.
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