HEROISM, LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

AN APPROACH TO SUSTAINING WELLBEING

Dr Olivia Eftimiou, School of Arts & Centre for Responsible Citizenship and Sustainability, Murdoch University

Sylvia T. Gray, Hero Town
The banality of heroism

What if the capability to act heroically is ... fundamentally ordinary and available to all of us?


---

2 types of heroic leadership

- ‘Classical’
- Masculine, ‘warrior’
- Egocentric
- Materialist
- Goals driven, outcomes focused
- Extrinsic motivation
- Privileged
- “Post-heroic” leadership school of thought
- The “dumbing down” of heroism
A ‘new’ heroic leadership

- Inclusive and democratic
- Story driven (epistemic)
- Inspirational (energizing)
- Sociocentric and ecosystems (ecological)
- Process or journey – embracing vulnerability
- Self-leadership – intrinsic motivation
- Creativity and entrepreneurism
- Intelligence (emotional, physical, spiritual etc.)
- Transformative

Heroic leadership

A sustainable form of action with wellbeing as its end goal.

Heroic wellbeing

• The complex process of effectively and intelligently managing resources and challenges (psychological, physical, and social);
• Directed toward wholeness in the individual and in the greater society; and
• Resulting in some type of reform that facilitates an ultimate state of flourishing (psychological, social, and/or physical—e.g., policy, activism, health).

= Responsible citizenship


Quality of Life: 8 Domains and Indicators of Heroic Wellbeing

• Application of OECD domains and indicators for wellbeing to key learnings, including the WHO (Five) Wellbeing Index (1998 version)
Democratising heroic leadership

2 contrasting visions of heroism and democracy evolved side by side.

(1) Exclusive – democracy that involves heroic leadership by exceptional individuals, relatively limited volunteer participation by ordinary citizens.

(2) Inclusive – heroism as integral to everyday life for ordinary people, and widespread volunteer participation in social life as normative in all democracies.

HERO TOWN

Democratising heroic leadership:
Empowering and educating heroic mindset and resilience

Theory

Practice
Heroic Leadership Skillset

- Hero’s Journey
- Mindset
- Social Resilience

How are these leadership skills heroic?

- Hero’s Journey
- Mindset
- Social Resilience
Fixed Mindset

The belief that talent, ability, and intelligence are fixed and cannot be changed through learning, experience and feedback.

Growth Mindset

The belief that talent, ability, and intelligence can be adapted and changed through learning, experience and feedback.
**Tools**

- Language
  - Self and others
  - Internal motivation
  - Strengths-based approach
    - Freak Factor
  - Learning curve
  - Purposeful practice
  - Fail sessions
  - Gratitude

**FAIL**

- Fiasco
- Catastrophe
- Disaster
- Loser
- Let Down
- Disappointment
First / Further
Attempt
In
FAIL
Learning
Purposeful Practice

Practice
Seek Feedback
Adapt Strategies

Praise & Feedback

Fixed
“Great job on your work.
You exceeded your KPIs.
Well done!”

Growth
“Great job on your work.
You put in a lot of effort.
Well done!”
I can do ANYTHING!

**Growth Mindset**

The belief that talent, ability, and intelligence can be adapted and changed through learning, experience and feedback.

**False Growth Mindset**

The belief that if you attempt something, you can achieve it. The individual doesn’t utilise feedback or adapt their approach to a task.

---

**Heroic Leadership Skillset: Mindset**

- Embrace vulnerability
- Fail forward
- Purposeful practice
- Praise & Feedback
- Celebrate strengths
Democratic, inclusive heroic leadership: heroism as integral to everyday life for ordinary people, and widespread volunteer participation in social life as normative in all democracies.

Social resilience: the ability of citizens to recognise and effectively respond to psychological, environmental, and social threats.
Obstacles

No time
Distraction
Group ignorance
Diffusion of responsibility
Spotlight effect
Difficulty
Danger
Positive deviance is when an individual’s behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, or characteristics contradict social norms in a positive way.
Practice Positive Deviance

- Overdress for the occasion
- Draw a circle on your forehead
- Order dessert first
- Face the wrong way on an elevator
- Everyday acts of kindness
Get Uncomfortable

0:30
Be aware

Ambiguous event

Notice event

Be first

Assess the situation

Assume responsibility

Be specific

Decide appropriate response

Provide help

NO HELP PROVIDED
Pause for thought

Heroic leaders are effective strategists

• How can we drive change in the presence of institutional and organisational barriers?
• How can you become a ‘leading agent’ without cultivating self-leadership at the organisational level?
• How can we fix a ‘broken’ and fragmented system if we are ‘broken’ ourselves?
The troubles of our world are not for great individuals to solve, but for every one of us to solve. Gifts are not the monopoly of great people. Every human being possesses one or more gifts to make the world a better place. Every human being is called to discover his or her gift. ... We are all destined to walk the same hero’s journey in our own individually unique way, as global citizens and as global scientists.


**THANK YOU!**

- *Heroism Science* - the first peer-refereed journal dedicated to the study of heroism.

Olivia Eftimiou heroismscience@gmail.com
Sylvia T. Gray sylvia@herotown.com.au