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If You Can Dream It, You Can Do It: Walt Disney's Hero's Journey to Professional Identity

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

Charles M. McCoin

May 2021

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Dr. Virginia Foley, Chair

Dr. John Boyd

Dr. Pamela Scott

Keywords: identity, storytelling, Walt Disney, Hero's Journey

## ABSTRACT

If You Can Dream It, You Can Do It: Walt Disney's Hero's Journey to Professional Identity

by

Charles McCoin

The purpose of this multi-method single-case study was to examine the application of Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model as a means of professional identity creation in the life of Walt Disney.

Walt Disney was an entrepreneur, cartoonist, filmmaker, inventor, studio head, and family man whose career stretched through the first half of the 20th century. Walt used his imagination and creativity to establish industry norms in the animation, film, television, and amusement park industries. Walt Disney's legacy and vision continue to be a viable influence within the Walt Disney Company today.

Campbell's Heroic Journey model was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The Heroic Journey model is rooted in folklore but is used as a means of personal self-discovery and self-construction (Murray, 2009). In the model, Campbell (2008) suggested that the world's myths were not a series of differing myths but one myth, the monomyth, played out differently across cultures. The monomyth is broken into three parts (separation, initiation, and return), with 17 stages dispersed across the parts.

The Heroic Journey model states that all heroes leave their familiar world, progress through trials, and return home with new learning for change. This framework was applied to Walt Disney's life to look at the narrative influence on his professional identity. The expansion of narrative scholarship and its influence on creating personal and professional identity using historical research, document review, and observational data was the purpose of this qualitative study.

The Heroic Journey model acts as a lens to create and discover one's identity by using stories as a vehicle of understanding. All of life's experiences must be viewed as narrative experiences to use the Heroic Journey model.

This study found that narrative cannot be separated from the human experience. It is one's life and lived experiences that create the story of their existence through separation, initiation, and return. Every experience from one's birth to death contributes to whom they will become both personally and professionally. By looking at life as a series of stories and narratives, one realizes the depth of their identity through reflection and examination.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother and grandmother. Respectively, they have encouraged me to reach for the stars and settled for nothing less than the best. They have been the living testament to the power of faith, hard work, and resilience.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation began in the late 1980s. I was four, and my mom, dad, aunt, uncle, and I traveled to Walt Disney World for the first time. Since then, I have made many trips, but that moment began my enchantment with the magic of Walt Disney.

If I learned anything from this in-depth study of Walt Disney's life is that nothing is possible alone. It takes faith and dedication to those that believe in you to make your dreams come true. My success in this step of my education resulted from a supportive community and the love of a gracious, merciful, creative God.

I cannot possibly thank and express my appreciation and gratitude to all those that have guided me. For some, I may not know the depth of their influence until much later down the road, but I hope they know how much they mean to me.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

The Walt Disney Company began as one man's dream. Walt Disney was an American entrepreneur and visionary who transformed into an American mythological hero. As with many great heroes, Walt Disney came from humble beginnings and transformed himself into the leader of one of the world's most influential entertainment companies. That company still guides itself with many of the core tenants of Walt Disney's vision.

Walt Disney created and led a business that capitalized on the human need for stories by creating new and reinvented tales for future generations. Through his vision and leadership, he touched nearly every person's life over the last century, whether through film, print, television, or one of the six Disney resorts across the globe. Walt Disney fed humanity's insatiable narrative appetite through imagination.

Humans are addicted to stories, and no life is void of a narrative. The human experience is a narrative experience as stories create and define all facets of human existence, from personal identity to relationships to entertainment. Gottschall (2013) noted that humans are so addicted to stories that they use them unknowingly to make sense of who they are and their world.

### **Significance of the Study**

The influences of narratives and stories are overlooked opportunities for self-discovery and self-creation. There is a lack of research exploring how narratives create and influence professional identity despite the respective existence of narrative, identity, and leadership scholarship. There is not a precise method of evaluating the influence of stories. Using Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model's adaptation as a lens of understanding offered a method to interpret life events. There is a need to expand the body of scholarship concerning the narrative's influence on personal and professional identity creation.

The current study addresses three areas of significance: (a) it explored narrative as a tool for sensemaking, (b) it furthered the scholarship of Walt Disney as a narrative leader, and (c) it expanded the scholarship and use of Campbell's (2008) Hero's Journey as a tool for self-discovery and self-creation. Overall, this study was intended to further narrative research and discover sensemaking tools for identity using Walt Disney's life and career as an example.

Human communication is a narrative experience (Fisher, 1984). Through narrative experiences, humans attempt to make sense of their lives by translating major and minor events into words. This study added to the body of narrative research by evaluating how stories and narratives are used to make sense of life events for the sake of personal and professional identity.

Furthering scholarship on the life, work, and impact of Walt Disney is the second point of significance of this study. Walt Disney has been mythologized by creating the "Uncle Walt" persona (Gabler, 2006). Walt was not just the company's creator, but he is its most celebrated character the company created (Zwonitzer et al., 2015b). This study attempted to understand the myth and reveal more about the man through the examination of artifacts that tell the story of Walt Disney's life and contribute to his professional identity from a narrative perspective.

Thirdly, this study used Campbell's (2008) Heroic Journey model to further the scholarship of identity creation. Campbell's model, originating in folkloristics, was applied to the narrative of Walt Disney's life to gain perspective on his professional identity. The application can be replicated as a means of self-discovery and self-creation for all persons in varying leadership capacities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this multimethod single-case study was to examine the application of Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model as a means of professional identity creation in the life

of Walt Disney. The expansion of narrative scholarship and its influence on creating personal and professional identity was the purpose of this qualitative study. The applied theoretical framework and methods can be applied to other leadership situations.

### **Heroic Journey Model: A Theoretical Framework**

Campbell's Heroic Journey model was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The Heroic Journey model is rooted in folklore but is used as a means of personal self-discovery and self-construction (Murray, 2009). In the model, Campbell (2008) suggested that the world's myths were not a series of differing myths but one myth, the monomyth, played out differently across cultures. The monomyth is broken into three parts (separation, initiation, and return), with 17 stages dispersed across the parts. The Heroic Journey model states that all heroes leave their familiar world, progress through trials, and return home with new learning for change. This framework was applied to Walt Disney's life to look at the narrative influence on his professional identity.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching research questions for this study were:

RQ1: How did each part (separation, initiation, and return) of the monomyth in the Heroic Journey model help create Walt Disney's professional identity?

RQ2: How does Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model apply to the development of professional identity in the life of Walt Disney?

### **Definition of Terms**

This study has five major terms that require definition: narrative, myth, hero, identity, and professional identity. The definition of these ideas differs across disciplines and scholars'



perceptions. Each concept was explored to showcase the variety in its definitions. Then, a working definition for this study was provided.

## **Narrative**

The definition of narrative and story varies. For some scholars, narrative and story are interchangeable terms. Geisler (1997) offered the National Council of Teachers of English's definition of storytelling:

Storytelling is relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gestures. It is not the same as reading a story aloud or reciting a piece from memory or acting out a drama-- though it shares common characteristics with these arts. The storyteller looks into the eyes of the audience, and together they compose the tale. The storyteller begins to see and recreate, through voice and gesture, a series of mental images; the audience from the first moment of listening, squints, stares, smiles, leans forward or falls asleep, letting the teller know whether to slow down, speed up, elaborate, or just finish. Each listener, as well as each teller compose a unique set of story images derived from meanings associated with words, gestures, and sounds. The experience can be profound, exercising the thinking and touch the emotions of both the teller and listener (p.2).

This definition suggests that storytelling is not an isolated act but a shared experience.

Storytelling is an encounter between the listener and the teller as each party has an active part in creating the narrative. The committee added that storytelling brings inspiration to the imagination, healing to the soul, and challenges to human beliefs.

Definitions of narrative and stories are complexly varied. Some scholars viewed narrative and story as synonymous entities (Denning, 2011). From a communication perspective, Berger (2006) defined narrative as "a story, generally sequential in nature, with a beginning, a middle

(where complications arise), and a resolution" (p.155). Søderberg (2003) defined a story as a communicative act that is either oral or written, containing a chronological dimension. Onega and Landa (1995) defined narrative as an act of communication of collected actions and events arranged to provide a causal explanation or plot. Kjaerbeck (2008), in a study on using narratives in disagreements, defined narrative as a participatory act between a speaker and listener in the retelling of a sequentially organized chain of events. Each definition contained similar concepts, such as order and the verbalization of events.

Some scholars distinguished a difference between story and narrative. They argued that story and narrative are not synonymous terms. Rosile et al. (2013) offered a working definition of storytelling to explore storytelling paradigms. The researchers defined storytelling as an interplay between larger master narratives and smaller stories. Corman (2013) contended a similar idea that narratives are a collection of resolved and unresolved stories supporting the idea that narrative is an umbrella term used to house stories. Therefore, narrative and story are not interchangeable ideas. Freeman (2006) and Roberts (2004) purported that, over time, personal stories have the potential to transition into larger narratives as community members find points of relationship with personal stories. Narrative, for some, resonates globally as the sense of universality relates to the beliefs and values of a greater community. For others, stories are personal to individuals, and narratives are more applicable to a community.

Bamberg (2004) and Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) supported the differentiation of narrative and story. Bamberg's studies examined the narrative and storytelling influence on identity creation and discussed narrative and storytelling concepts as "big stories" and "small stories." "Small stories" were defined as daily occurrences and personal interactions. Narratives defined as "big stories" were considered community stories that resonated with the greater

whole. Roberts (2004) argued narrative creation is a community process that provides potential direction for listeners. Bamberg (2004), Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008), Freeman (2006), and Roberts (2004) had similar views on the global and personal distinction between narrative and stories.

In contrast, Fisher (1987) implied that the distinction between narrative and stories was the narrator's role because the individual is in the process of living their own stories. Fisher looked at stories and narratives as an act of narration, which he defined as a series of symbolic actions through words and or in deeds sequenced and meaningful for those who lived, created, or interpreted them. Narration is an act of communication embedded in a person's story that offers meaning and contains an element of value externally, internally, or both (Fisher, 1989).

This study viewed narrative and stories as interchangeable terms despite the critically differing narrative and story distinctions through scholarship. Narratives and stories were accepted as an act of communication for understanding. All definitions provide overlapping elements, such as a sequential order and the ability to communicate meaning. Narratives and stories are central to all individuals, organizations, and communities. Regardless of definition or the ideas of interchangeability, the virtues of narrative and stories are the same.

## **Myth**

Traditional definitions of myth define it as a perspective of an aspect of a culture. The tale is a way to understand and explain a phenomenon, so the crux of a myth is to teach something. Hutchinson (2000) asserted that the myth acts as a template for human growth and development, instructing how to live and face life's challenges.

In classical Greek, the word myth comes from "mythos," which referred to any story or plot that was either true or invented. Over time, the idea of myth transformed to mean one story

in larger mythology (Abrams & Harpham, 2014). Witzel (2012) argued that myths are more than just potentially fantastic stories. Childs and Fowler (2005) added myths are stories of unknown origins often associated with religion, usually about gods or heroes. The myth usually constitutes some universal change or a change to social life. Myths are universally applicable across time and culture.

Myths are narrative experiences that force humanity to question the origin of the world and nature and its inhabitants' destiny by interpreting symbols. For some, myth is interpreted as a collective group of symbols constructed and deconstructed over time and culture for understanding. The purpose of traditional myths is to fill gaps in knowledge, especially between nature and culture, and give voice to the unknown (Abrams & Harpham, 2014; Pestana & Codina, 2020).

van Binsbergen et al. (2008) considered myth synonymous with narrative by recognizing narrative and myths' ability to fill the same roles within a culture. Like narratives, myths are told for specific occasions in the culture. Myths possessed a standardized nature making them accurate to multiple cultural groups. In some cases, the narratives or myths are collectively owned and communicated ideas, universal truths about the human condition, and current culture. Myths are used to explain contemporary society by being structured to communicate the origin of ideas for the purpose of understanding.

Blumenberg (1988) viewed myth as an ongoing collection of stories rather than a fixed collection, which differs from others' ideas. Rooted in philosophy and psychology, Blumenberg offered that myth was not limited to ancient tales, but the myth was a modern tool to help people cope with current reality. Myths fill a void because science cannot translate experiences of

reality into words; therefore, myth was viewed not as an ancient concept but as a lens for understanding current reality.

This study used Campbell's (2008) definition of myth. Campbell focused on the experiential nature of life, and defined myth as life experiences, and asserted myths "are clues to the spiritual potentialities of human life" (Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). Campbell argued that all myths communicate the hero's experience on the journey. It is the hero's journey that communicates the human experience. Therefore, myth was defined as the human experience.

## **Hero**

The definition of a hero is a person that performs epic feats ("The epic hero: defining the meaning of hero," 2011). Angood (2018) provided four distinct characteristics to define heroes: a hero usually is (a) an individual of supernatural strength and ability, (b) an illustrious warrior, (c) an individual with noble qualities, and/or (d) one that shows great courage. Chico (2015) suggested that heroes are not limited to mythological figures, but heroes are everyday individuals. A hero goes beyond expectation, makes positive impacts on people's lives, and rises above and beyond the ordinary.

Campbell (2008) defined a hero as someone who has given their life to something bigger than themselves. A hero evolves and develops through the steps of the hero's journey. According to Campbell, a hero can be anyone, either through choice or chance, unlike the mythical nature in antiquity. This study used Campbell's definition to define the concept of a hero. The essence of a hero is the giving of oneself to a larger cause for a greater community.

## **Identity**

The Latin root of identity communicates oneness, causing tension between oneself and finding oneself (Buckingham, 2008). Eisenberg et al. (2016) defined identity as how one

positions oneself in the world using language and action. The current concept of identity is genuinely knowing oneself. Individuals have multiple and, often, unchosen identities ranging from gender, class, race, and geographical location. This idea of identity communicates the paradoxical nature of identity because it sets individuals apart while connecting them with the community. Definitions of identity and the process of creating identity vary across disciplines.

Identity is an act of categorization to make sense and bring order to the world and provide self-knowledge (Maddalena, 2013). Through social identity theory, scholars focus on the method people use to create an identity based on the categorization of their surroundings by applying meaning and interpreting symbols.

This study defined identity as the process of knowing oneself through the interpretation of external and internal factors (Gould, 2010).

### **Professional Identity**

The concept of professional identity does not have a concrete definition. Sutherland et al. (2010) proposed that professional identity is an extension of individual identity. Professional identity is connected to a person's position within society, interactions with others, and interpretations of experience. In other words, professional identity is an interpretation and reinterpretation of personal identity to face professional challenges.

This study defined professional identity as the interpretation of self-concerning in accord to leadership responsibilities. Professional identity is directly related to how a leader's identities and views align with professional and leadership opportunities.

### **Chapter Summary**

This study focused on the narrative's influence in creating the professional identity of Walt Disney by using Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model as a lens of understanding the

communicative process of personal and professional identity creation. This study looked at leadership from a communications perspective and explored storytelling as a means of understanding and discovery concerning personal and professional identity. The following chapters include a review of literature, methodology, findings, and results.

## **Chapter 2. Review of Essential Literature**

This review of essential literature explored the relationship between the Heroic Journey model and the creation of personal and professional identity using Walt Disney's life and career as a single case example. This literature review explored topics connected to the Heroic Journey model and its potential influence on professional identity to establish a general understanding of essential concepts. The sections include (a) models of the communication process, (b) communication approaches to leadership, (c) leadership as a social practice, (e) narrative as communication, (e) narrative paradigm, (g) other storytelling paradigms, (h) the Hero's Journey and its functions, (i) professional identity, (j) reflection, and (k) Walt Disney.

### **Models of the Communication Process**

Communication is an essential key that links all human experiences. Human communication is one of the fundamental activities that define the human experience, and it is dangerous for one to underestimate the simplest form of communication (Thayer, 1986). Barnlund (2008a) asserted that the ultimate goal of communication is making meaning. Ruben (2005) defined communication as "the process through which the social fabric of relationship, groups, organizations, societies, and world order--and disorder-- is created and maintained" (p.294).

There are varied perspectives on the communication process. Each perspective places emphasis on one part of the process or another. Varied emphasis placed by researchers directly impacts the intention and function of the communication process. Three popular communication models are the transmissional model, the interactional model, and the transactional model (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016).



## **Transmissional Model of Communication**

The transmission model of communication is an adaptation of the earliest ideas of communication stemming from Aristotle. In this model of communication, there is a sender and receiver. Messages are encoded, sent through the channel, and decoded for meaning; messages in this context are verbal or nonverbal. The transmissional communication model is linear and focuses on the sender's intentionality and looks at the receiver as the end goal in communication (Ellis & McClintock, 2009). This model offers an unbalanced perception of power due to its linear nature. It is perceived that the one speaking and sending the message is the one with the most power (Wittenberg et al., 2015).

When looking at the transmissional model concerning leadership as communication, it simplifies the process by asserting that leadership success is directly related to the sender and receiver's actions in the communication process. For there to be successful leadership communication, the leader has to send the right messages to the receivers. The leader does not control the message, but the interaction between the leader, the message, and the sender creates the most meaning (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017).

## **Interactional Model of Communication.**

An alternate view of the communication process is the interactional model of communication. Within this model, each person, the sender, and the receiver take turns sending and receiving messages. The interactional model includes feedback that alters and adapts messages being sent and received for deeper meaning. The interactional communication model emphasizes the interaction between individuals rather than the message itself (Schramm, 1997). This model is unpredictable due to the relationship between meaning, messages, selection,

interpretation, and retention (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). The success or failure of this model concerning leadership is unknown due to its unpredictable nature of the process.

### **Transactional Model of Communication.**

The transactional model of communication is a process that focuses on the community of communication. In transactional communication, participants are no longer senders and receivers, but they are communicators. Communicators are senders and receivers simultaneously as the communication process never stops. Communicators work together to create social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts in this model. It is through communication that individuals create realities through engagement within community. Communication establishes social norms of behavior, creates and maintains relationships, and establishes identities (Barnlund, 2008b). Transactional communication allows community members to connect through authenticity and enhance shared understanding through valuable messages. This type of communication allows participants to focus on emotions, empathy, mindfulness, mutual respect, and awareness (Wittenberg et al., 2015).

Communicators must recognize that communication is more than the information exchange. Ruben & Gigliotti (2016) proposed a system's view of communication concerning viewing leadership as communication. The system's view of communication focuses on people creating, conveying, selecting, and interpreting the messages that inform and shape their lives—viewing communication as an essential life process rather than an exchange of information or meaning. As people enter communication situations, it must be realized that all messages are not intentional, and people bring personal life experiences with them (Thayer, 1986). As messages are sent and received and interpreted, lenses of experience aid in interpretation. Single messages and single exchanges rarely result in momentous communication moments. Instead, it is the

ongoing social process of communication that has a lasting impact (Ruben, 2016). This view of the communication process establishes communication as an ongoing inseparable faction of humanity. It is through ongoing and unending communication that humans create and transmit meaning.

### **Communication Approaches to Leadership**

The communication approach to leadership focuses on how a leader conveys meaning through vision, ideas, and instruction. Leaders play a galvanizing role in the communication process as the interaction with followers builds relationships, provides opportunities for improvement, and communicates meaning (Men, 2014). This process helps the leaders communicate who they are with the larger society. Through communication, leaders and followers solidify relationships and find satisfaction in their work (Wikaningrum & Yuniawan, 2018).

Effective leadership communication is not centered on the leader or the follower instead of the two's interaction. The mindfulness of leaders directly impacts the follower's satisfaction (Arendt et al., 2019). The more effectively a person learns about themselves and their ability to communicate, the more aptly they will be viewed as leaders.

Leadership communication is centered on sensemaking. Lawrence (2015) defined leadership communication as "the verbal and non-verbal transmission of knowledge across and through socially constructed cultural frameworks to influence, guide, or motivate action" (p.52). Leadership is a dynamic and deliberate communicative process that transforms and alters behaviors to meet the collective group's needs by creating and managing meaning (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). It is a communicative action that fills the gaps of knowledge as leadership is a communal act forged in the stewardship of relationships. Through ongoing communicative

interaction, individuals learn to navigate creativity and constraint within organizations while building relationships, creating culture, and sharing and motivating vision (Eisenberg et al., 2016; Hackman & Johnson, 2018; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Lawrence, 2015).

### **Leadership as a Social Practice**

Leadership is a practice that involves the interaction between individuals and the community. Pestana and Codina's (2020) study of women's creativity and the enhancement of emerging leaders' talent urged there was a shift in leadership that no longer focused on the circumstances and events that surrounded a leader. Instead, the focus is on identity through the experiences and influences of the individual leading. The leader's experiences shape the leadership identity of the individual and the cultural identity of the group.

Pestana and Codina (2020) described the social identity/social categorizations approach to leadership, a combination of theories. Within the theory, leadership is considered a socially communal act that creates leaders' and followers' identities. Four characteristics define this style. First, the leader projects oneness with the group. Then, the leader leads for the group's sake while creating a sense of "us" within the group. This study urged that the leader creates a culture that influences the identity of the group through unification.

Leaders reaffirm the identity of the group by making the group realize they matter. It is the reaffirmation of the importance of what is being done. They conclude the leader has the power to evaluate the self and the group and create a culture that is desired. The power of the leader makes leading a social communicative process (Pestana & Cordina, 2020).

### **Narrative as Communication**

Humans use stories as tools to create, communicate, and transmit meaning to satisfy the innate need for narrative to navigate the world to discover meaning (Peterson, 1999). Stories are

used to understand and discover the world's complexities and identities (Carr, 1986; Storr, 2020). Storytelling is communication in which narrative transforms knowledge into meaning, and it is the process of turning experiences into words for understanding (Kelly & Zak, 1999).

Storytelling serves many functions in the process of making meaning. Narratives and stories frame understanding and allow individuals to discover patterns of knowing about themselves and their world (Atkins, 2004; Babis, 2020; Davies, 2010; Halverson, 2008). Stories allow individuals to "try on" experiences to gain perspective and understanding greater than themselves (Hutchinson, 2000; Jones, 2014). Storytelling is central to the human experience because stories carry, communicate, and bring order and meaning to life (Gottschall, 2013).

The human brain is created for narrative. Through the engagement with stories, the brain processes emotions, images, and sensations (Snow & Lazauskas, 2018; Storr, 2020). Stories reinforce ideas that build culture, initiate action, communicate individual identity, transmit values, engage the community, and stories become vehicles for sharing knowledge across time and space (Blé, 2011; Hackman & Johnson, 2018; Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Gottschall (2013) propounded that stories are communal activities that fulfill the ancient need for a sense of community. In other words, no part of the human experience is void of stories, and what is known as communication is an act of storytelling.

Stories are as old as language (Jones, 2014). The storytelling experience is inseparable from the human experience as the human brain has a processing center for stories and narrative (Gottschall, 2013). Fisher (1984) referred to humans as *homo narrans* because the narrative tradition cannot be separated from the human experience. Biologically, culturally, socially, and psychologically humans are made for stories.

Jones (2014) explored the use of narrative for personal development. The study offered the idea that stories are the humans' source of understanding by applying theoretical narrative frameworks, notably Campbell's Hero's Journey and Dąbrowski's theory of positive disintegration. It is through narratives that humans make sense of the world, process change, and discover self. Narrative understanding emerges through reflection and application of past experiences to current experiences. This study further supported the idea that narratives cannot be separated from human experience and human communication.

### **Narrative Paradigm**

Fisher (1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1989) supported the idea that narratives were communication, and the narrative act could not be separated from the human experience. That idea of narrative and storytelling as communication is the central idea presented by Fisher (1984, 1987) in creating the narrative paradigm. This theoretical framework views the narrative process as the basis of all human communication. Fisher created the narrative paradigm to explain the interconnected, multidimensional nature of storytelling on the human experience. The narrative paradigm views people as storytellers, authors, and co-authors, and together they creatively read and reread the texts of life and literature.

Life is a world of stories. Fisher (1985b) suggested that the narrative paradigm uses narrative and stories to bridge the gap between logic and myth. In earlier centuries, mythos and logos were not separate entities with definitive characteristics, but, as philosophical thought changed, so did ideas of knowledge acquisition and a more definite separation between myth and logic. As logos became more defined in later centuries, the arts and sciences became unequal, in particular, philosophical perspectives.

The narrative paradigm established a place where both myth and logic work together as an avenue for understanding. Fisher (1989) implied that humans are narrators and continually participate in narration. The narrative paradigm is defined as symbolic actions, whether words or deeds ordered, and possessed meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them. The idea that narrative is inseparable from communication means that the narrative process is not passive. Audiences do not just listen to stories; they participate in them.

Not all narratives are equal as the worth of a narrative is measured by narrative rationality based on two standards: narrative coherence and narrative fidelity. Narrative coherence is the internal consistency of stories, which means the elements within stories flow and are reliable to humans' innate sense of story structure. Narrative fidelity is when a story aligns with the hearers' beliefs, and they can find points in which to relate. A strong story is relatable to the audience, and it relies more on its fluency than complexity (Fisher, 1985a; Snow & Lazauskas, 2018).

Due to the ever-present nature of stories within the human condition, people know when stories and narratives "feel right" (Burns, 2015). Fisher (1989) offered the "logic of good," which highlighted five value-related issues with narrative: (a) values are a part of the message, (b) values are relevant to decision making, (c) values have consequences, (d) values overlap with worldview, and (e) values establish the basis for conduct. When listeners share values, they open themselves to potential change through impactful transformative stories as a connection to narrative may alter beliefs and actions (Dicks & Kennedy; 2018; Griffin, 2019).

Narratives justify humanity, as Burns' (2015) study found that the persuasive technique of narrative occurs through justification. The study looked at college recruitment through focus groups at a Midwestern university in the United States. The persuasiveness of narrative provided opportunities for prospective students to reaffirm individual beliefs. The

narratives provided students an opportunity to visualize themselves as students at particular universities because they established a sense of belonging. This study provided an example of the humanity behind the narrative experience by providing opportunities for connection, affirmation, and justification.

The narrative paradigm is a lens for understanding the human experience as a storytelling experience, and this paradigm uses stories as a vehicle for communication. The power of Fisher's (1984) work is the ability for a story to make sense and be plausible through narrative fidelity, reliability, and coherence. Recognizing the patterns found within narratives can help strengthen a story (Cleverly-Thompson, 2018). Story structure can have as much influence on the function of the narrative as the narrative itself. Narratives can be in any order as long as the narrative makes sense to the audience, so, other than causes, the narrative is a vehicle for reason (Roundy, 2015; Rudd, 2009). It is through the interaction of narrative that individuals and communities find an emotional connection.

Emotional audience response is an essential quality of the interactivity of narrative. Emotions that arise as people interact with a story increase emotional involvement giving audience members a deeper interaction with narrative. In a study looking at first-person shooter video games, players felt more involved with the game when narrative elements were present. Emotion can emerge from the interaction with the content of a story or the structure of a story (Schneider et al., 2004). This level of interaction connects the player more deeply with the game. The depth of interaction an individual can have with narrative potentially relates to the level of emotions evoked, and this usually occurs through plausibility.

Plausibility is the influential element for emotional responses in narrative experiences. The idea of plausibility is what "rings true" for the audience. A story's plausibility is dependent



on the life experiences of the audience members because the more experience one has, the more levels of connection that individual will potentially have. Roundy (2015), in a study of narrative-induced emotion in organizational communication, proposed propositions relating to the relational and emotional response to narrative experiences.

The more an audience member or stakeholder can imagine the realistic nature of narrative, the more impact that narrative could have on their lives. The study suggested that a narrative's organizational content and structure can induce an emotional response in stakeholders. Narrative communication can produce emotion through sympathy, identification, recall of prior emotions, and transportation (Roundy, 2015).

### **Other Storytelling Paradigms**

The narrative paradigm is one avenue to understand the human's narrative experience and examine storytelling as communication. There are other paradigms or models that exist to understand narrative and storytelling experiences. Rosile et al. (2013) created the storytelling diamond, a model to understand the varying paradigms used in storytelling scholarship. Their study aimed to provide rigor and scholarship to identify various narrative paradigms for researchers and students. The storytelling diamond focused heavily on five paradigms for understanding story: narrativist, living story, materialist, interpretivist, and abstractionist.

### **Narrativist Paradigm**

The narrativist perspective uses bigger stories to make meaning. The nature of the narrative in this paradigm is that narrative must be useful and carry broader meaning. This paradigm uses the idea that humans are storytelling creatures, and all facets of human understanding are clothed in stories. Humans use narrative to make sense of their experiences. There is a reflective nature to the use of narrative, and it is assumed that a narrative will have a

traditional beginning, middle, and end. After experiencing and reflecting on a narrative, the hearer will use the tale for sensemaking (Fisher, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, & 1987; Rosile et al., 2013).

### **Living Story Paradigm**

Rosile et al. (2013) suggested that the living story paradigm looks at narrative experiences as a collectively active experience. This paradigm suggested that narratives have multiple creators, and they are currently being lived. This paradigm leans on the oral tradition and tends to be autobiographical, which can miss larger communal ideas. However, Harvey (2018), in a study looking at the importance of oral performance, added there is a need for the oral storytelling tradition as it creates connections between people, culture, and world. The personal and oral nature of lived stories can create challenges of textual incorporation.

### **Materialist Paradigm**

The materialist paradigm is concerned with disrupting the historical status quo (Rosile et al., 2013). Boje (2001) suggested that one of the materialistic paradigm's significant perspectives is microhistory and macrohistory concepts. This perspective aligns with the scholarly distinctions that narratives (macrohistory) are communal, and stories (microhistory) are personal. It is the idea that stories of the individual work to make the grand narrative of the community. The fault here is that the smaller stories in this paradigm are the stories of more prominent community members, and they are not reflective of all members of society.

### **Interpretivist Paradigm**

The interpretivist perspective allows users to make sense of the world using existing narratives. Practitioners of this perspective seek to know through a more in-depth analysis of

community and world narratives through deeper social interaction. These practitioners look for symbols to discover deeper meaning (Gabriel, 2000).

### **Abstractionist Paradigm**

The abstractionist paradigm is an empirical look at storytelling. In this paradigm, the researcher looks at recurring patterns in stories. Those patterns are generalized to give practitioners an understanding of the function of narratives and stories. The limitation of this perspective is that it limits practitioners in real-world experiences. The generalization is void of practical application (Boje, 2011; Rosile et al., 2013).

Regardless of the paradigm used, the purpose of storytelling is to provide direction for the human experience (Roberts, 2004). Each paradigm comes with benefits and limitations, but each offers researchers and students a lens to understand narrative function in varying situations.

### **The Hero's Journey and Its Functions**

Using narrative, the Hero's Journey is a psychological practice to conceptualize self and create a discovery map to understand and face change and challenges (Williams, 2019). The Hero's Journey is a quest for transformation rooted in folkloristics and mythological studies. Campbell (2008) developed the framework to gain an understanding of world narratives. Campbell believed the structure of the world's narratives were the same. Early in Campbell's research on world myths, he attempted to identify the differences among stories across cultures. Instead, he discovered that the world did not have varying myths, but the world shared one myth, the monomyth. The tale's core truth is the same despite fluctuating characters and events (Konner & Perlmutter, 1988; Roberts, 2004).

The monomyth consisted of three parts: separation, initiation, and return. Within the three parts of the journey, the hero will encounter and/or work through 17 different stages: (a) the call

to adventure, (b) refusal of the call, (c) supernatural aid, (d) crossing first threshold, (e) belly of the whale, (f) road of trials, (g) meeting with the goddess, (h) temptation, (i) freedom to live, (j) master of two worlds, (k) crossing the return threshold, (l) rescue from without, (m) magic flight, (n) refusal of the return, (o) the ultimate boon, (p) apostasis, and (q) atonement with the father. Each stage of the monomyth is unique to a particular part of the journey (Campbell, 2008).

### **Separation**

In the separation stage, the hero will leave familiar surroundings and embark on a journey. In this part of the journey, the hero will either accept or refuse the call to adventure. As the journey begins, the hero will get supernatural aid of some kind, usually in the form of a mentor, and begin to face the first challenges on the quest (Campbell, 2008).

### **Initiation**

During the initiation, the hero will encounter a road of trials, meeting the Goddess, temptress, atonement, apotheosis, and the ultimate boon. In these stages, the hero faces challenges and ultimately overcomes those challenges, although the challenges are perceived failures. The failures a hero experiences are evidence of risks being taken, and failure is central to the journey, but the challenges the hero encounters are conquered because the hero is equipped to face them (Davis & Weeden, 2009; Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). The initiation part of the journey forms the hero into the person the hero must become before returning home.

### **Return**

The hero will return with the newly gained insight and power; the hero returns home to bestow the new learning and knowledge. The hero, by choice, does have the option on the journey not to return home, and stay in the land where enlightenment occurred. When the hero returns, he needs guidance to make it home. The return offers the hero the opportunity to lead a

more fulfilled life based on lived experiences through trials and feedback (Campbell, 2008; Davis & Weeden, 2009). Once home, sharing newfound learning is the responsibility of the newly transformed (Williams, 2019).

### **A Sense of Discovery**

The Hero's Journey is a process of discovery and learning that uses storytelling to teach and produce potential change through self-knowledge and self-discovery due to the quest (Adi et al., 2015; Holder & McKinney, 1992; Holmes, 2007; Murray, 2009). When an individual decides to embark on a journey, it is not always for the current state's inadequacy, but the hero recognizes the need to gain knowledge (Davis & Weeden, 2008). The Hero's Journey is discovering a sense of self through trials and experiences.

Myths grant audiences with instructions on the use of power. Peterson (1999) added to Campbell's ideas by asserting heroes are creative explorers caught between what is known and unknown, and the process of using myth is a means to make the unknown known. Meaning-making is accomplished by using traditional myths' structure because the form and nature of myths provide comfort to those who experience them. After all, the mythical structure is stable, consistent, and predictable. The myth explains processes and provides examples to live as the hero. The myth sets examples of conquering and surviving the unknown.

The Heroic Journey model is not perfect. One critique of Campbell's model is that it focuses too much on the human condition versus the state and function of myth (Jones, 2014). Campbell asserted that the human condition is what creates myths. One cannot separate myth and the human condition. Other critics suggested that Campbell's framework is too male-centered and misses the feminine experience, and it is too specific with its parts and dedicated

steps. That specificity level cannot accurately encompass all the world's myths (Davis & Weeden, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1988).

In the end, Campbell's (2008) framework of the hero's journey has grown beyond folkloristics and mythology. Other scholars and across disciplines have used the framework as a path of understanding. The Hero's Journey has become a framework for sensemaking, a way to process and communicate change, and an avenue to create identities.

### **The Hero's Journey as a Tool for Sensemaking**

Storytelling is a process that gives meaning to uncertainty. Sensemaking begins in chaos, and storytelling brings order to chaos (Gottschall, 2013). Stories and myths are used to make the unknown known (Peterson, 1999). Sensemaking requires individuals to make sense of an ever-changing, ongoing, unpredictable world through communication and reflection. Stories and narratives allow individuals to "compress information, select it, highlight it, and frame it to create meaning" (Kelly & Zak, 1999, p.313).

Sensemaking is a concept that exists in multiple disciplines (Weick et al., 2005). In the mid-20th century, Weick coined the term sensemaking to identify the process used to fill in the gaps of knowledge concerning events or situations by processing that event or situation into words for further examination (Weick, 1997; Weick et al., 2005). Weick approaches the idea of sensemaking from a psychological perspective, and much of his research is focused on organizational communication.

Sensemaking requires action. It is not a cerebral act, but it is a literal act. The central idea of sensemaking is to make sense of events and situations by asking "why." Weick suggested that questioning thrusts the one that asks into action. When one asks, they are forced to decide to propel a sustained sense of meaning (Weick et al., 2005). In the process of sensemaking, one will

categorize, anticipate, or assume. The action behind sensemaking is about how individuals generate events and situations that they will later interpret for meaning (Weick, 1995).

It is critical that sensemaking not be confused with interpretation. The two concepts are not interchangeable; sensemaking is a process of understanding. Interpretation could be a process, but it lends itself to the act of description. The implication of knowledge and understanding of an event or situation is associated with interpretation. Therefore, a person attempts to explain the significance of an event before the act of sensemaking happens (Weick, 1995).

Sensemaking is a process, and within the process, there are critical ideas at work. Sensemaking is grounded in identity; it is retrospective, and it is enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, and focused on by extracted cues. Sensemaking is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy.

As events and situations occur, those that experience or witness the events bring unique and individual personal experiences that contribute to their identities. When individuals' experiences confirm or oppose a situation, they will retrospectively examine the event or situation. Through retrospection, the individual will assess the event's plausibility by comparing and interacting with what they remembered based on sensibility and social acceptability and interaction. Individuals will then try to make sense of what happened through potential plausible solutions. The examination of what is plausible does not mean individuals are looking for accuracy, but they are looking for ideas and solutions that make sense to them in the realm of their worldview through understanding and experience (Weick, 1995, 2001; Weick et al., 2005; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

The process of sensemaking is ongoing, and it happens many times in one's day. It occurs so rapidly that it is often unnoticed because it is a natural way for humans to process meaning through living. The reflexivity of sensemaking is where meaning is derived through rationalized behavior (Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking can be a dangerous act when it is carried out without care and proper understanding. It becomes a solo act as people compare experiences to what they believe, know, and understand. When events and situations align with a person's belief, those events and situations will go unquestioned or possibly unnoticed. Often a person is sensemaking to reaffirm what they believe versus to expand their depth of knowledge and experiences. When events do not align themselves with existing personal beliefs, knowledge, and understanding, they are dismissed.

The practice of sensemaking teaches purpose. Sensemaking is required in the face of change both in the organization and individually. Weick (2001) argued that coping abilities are strengthened and maintained when people have the opportunity and knowledge to enact their skills. Individuals that do not have the opportunity will have weakened skills and not have the ability to communicate their individual "why." Thomson and Hall's (2011) study looked at sensemaking as a lens of understanding in everyday change.

To further the idea leadership is a communicative practice, one must realize that sensemaking is a process that occurs through the construction of narrative, representations, and enactment (Weick 1995, 2001; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). It is critical to realize that sensemaking is a social activity central to creating an identity, both personally, professionally, and organizationally.

The Hero's Journey is a means to make sense of self. According to Williams (2019), the Hero's Journey offers a framework for reconceptualization. In William's study, looking at the



Hero's Journey as a mud map for change, he argued that individuals on a journey of self-discovery and self-creation use the Hero's Journey to make meaning. In the separation stage, an individual recognizes the need for change. The initiation stage begins as a person starts to change and face issues head-on to gain skills. People will encounter setbacks, but they will use those setbacks not as ends but as a means to continue. This process offers the person a greater sense of self. Finally, in the hero's return, there is heightened self-awareness. Individuals see trials for what they are despite the possibility they could be obstacles in the future.

### **The Hero's Journey as a Means of Processing Change**

The Hero's Journey establishes change as a continual state of being. Every change thrusts an individual on a hero's journey, which means individuals experience multiple Hero's Journeys at any given time. (Campbell, 2008; Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). Understanding the narrative process allows change to act as a crucible for understanding human life's nuances through coping, facilitating, managing, and general understanding (Dicks & Kennedy, 2018; Yogerst, 2014).

An assumption the future is established, stable, and predictable is the biggest misconception when navigating change through coping, facilitating, managing, and understanding (Holder & McKinney, 1992). Any actions, calculated or not, taken in the present can effectively prepare one for the impending change. The reality is that change is a process, and a quest to create an identity.

Change characterizes part one, separation, of the Hero's Journey as change disrupts the status quo for ideal improvement for the future. Change brings uncertainty because it alters traditional norms. Narrative can help individuals make sense of change by offering perspective

(Strom, 2009). Facilitating successful change happens with care and purpose as individuals realize change is inevitable and requires flexibility (Eisenberg et al., 2016).

Change is inevitable and challenging. According to Hackman and Johnson (2013), change is a creative process that requires broad thinking versus local thinking. Scholarship emerged urging the need for balance for healthy sustaining change (Alase, 2017).

From a narrative perspective, storytelling is a means to communicate change (Fisher, 1984). Change within any community must have meaning and not focus on innovation alone (Alase, 2017; Andrade, 2011; Fullan, 2001; Fullan, 2006). Leadership and change are humanistic ventures that require knowledge and skills that are unique to the human being. Understanding humanity is an extension of understanding narrative (Kelly & Zak, 1999). The facilitation of effective change occurs through the narrative nature of relationships, culture, and reflection.

For change to have a longstanding purpose, leaders must focus on relationships (Fullan, 2001). Within the Hero's Journey, heroes foster relationships with mentors. Those relationships help them achieve the purpose of the journey. Relationships are a way for leaders to establish and communicate a vision for change (Eisenberg et al., 2016). A relational focus is commonly associated with a transformational style within leadership where leaders view themselves as stewards of responsibility to the community.

A hero returning from a journey brings knowledge to better the community (Campbell, 2008). Ideally, the community shares the change agent's role with the new knowledge because change cannot be carried out and sustained by one or a few (Fullan, 1996). Often, leaders in the transformational style assume change agent roles (Eisenberg et al., 2016). All community members, including the leaders, must facilitate and sustain healthy change by communicating purpose, vision, and meaning for the greater good.

Storytelling and narratives communicate the purpose, vision, and meaning of the greater good from the Hero's Journey. The same stories work to develop relationships to establish common ground for change (Meyer, 2014). Lum (2008) explored the idea of community born from the narrative. The cultivation of change occurs by discovering commonalities that support ideas of the monomythic nature of the Hero's Journey (Campbell, 2008).

Sustained change from the hero's return in the Hero's Journey will ideally be the hero's legacy. For a change within the community to be long-lasting, change must be relevant to the individuals, community, and culture (Ginsberg & Bernstein, 2011). This type of change requires mutual relational commitment from the community to enable community growth (Ginsberg & Bernstein, 2011). Relationships are essential to the change process because the people who establish and maintain relationships are the ones who work toward the vision of change and pursue the shared mission (Andrade, 2011).

The hero's return is creating and implementing new norms through change (Campbell, 2008). Communities do not change because they are told to change. They change by slowly reconstructing norms and behaviors and establishing and modeling new values and practices by replacing existing values and practices (Fullan, 2006). Culture is dynamic in the sense that it mediates through the dominant culture (Lum, 2008). Stories act as a support vehicle for change as individuals continuously define and redefine their existence within the master narrative (Brown et al., 2009; Kraus, 2006). The hero helps craft the narrative using stories to make sense of the world by allowing stakeholders and community members to embrace change elements.

When the hero returns, they may seem out of place in the beginning because it takes time for new narratives to embed themselves within a community and, eventually, the culture. The culture connected to that community establishes over time. According to Ginsberg and Bernstein

(2011), like the hero, leaders and other change agents model desired beliefs and behaviors.

Group members will eventually emulate the modeled behavior. Sustaining change must happen collectively in the context of the community and not in unknown isolation.

Change is one of the greatest enemies of tradition. Sustaining cultural change perpetuates itself through socialization within a community. Dilemmas that impact a local community are organizational (Lum, 2008). Ginsberg and Bernstein's (2011) study explored instructional change at the university level and discovered in longstanding communities, like a university, that culture is deeply connected to tradition.

As with tradition, the longer a person is a member of an established community, the stronger their ties are to that establishment's cultural norms. As a result, they could be the most resistant to change, even though the change is healthy, needed, and positive. There should be more members of the community willing to embrace change than those who oppose it to foster healthy change within a long-established community. Therefore, heroes returning to communities need to be cultural change agents to be moral leaders and ambassadors for the new change. (Fullan, 1996; Fullan, 2001).

According to Ginsberg and Bernstein (2011), the change agent is connected within the culture to help change occur while possessing the passion for change. The facilitator acts as the bridge. The facilitator role has the institutional power to demand change while possessing "working knowledge" to make the change happen. In the end, a change in the culture must have purpose and meaning to the community while respecting tradition and meeting a modern need.

Reflection is deeply ingrained in the change process because change must make sense to the doer. Initially, the purpose of change may not be apparent. Initially, it takes critical thinking of the seen and unseen to make sense of the community, culture, and change. Real learning

occurs when individuals think about what they are doing (Daniels, 2008; Weick, 1995). Fullan (2006) added, people learn best by doing, reflecting, inquiring, examining evidence, and then more doing.

The narrative is the ultimate sense maker in any given community because narratives give meaning to what is intangible, so the returning hero must communicate effectively. Young (2012) explored the use of narrative in women's transformation stories and suggested that stories are nouns because the essence of a story makes the abstract concrete. Concrete objects are needed to understand change. Narratives on change require leaders to understand change's meaning. Understanding comes through reflection and time.

Change in the Hero's Journey is an interpersonal process. It is the knowledge brought back by the hero that empowers communities through narrative experiences. For sustaining change to take root, change must happen within the culture (Ginsberg & Bernstein, 2011). Changing the culture is a slow process but necessary for sustained results. Change of any kind at any level must have meaning to participants. As change is in action, it may not be valued and understood at the time, but the reflection and examination of change add value (Brown et al., 2009; Fullan, 2001, 2006; Lum, 2008; McMaster, 2015).

### **The Hero's Journey and Identity**

The Latin root of identity communicates oneness, which causes tension between being oneself and finding oneself (Buckingham, 2008). Identity is a paradox because identity is what sets individuals apart while connecting that individual with a community. Definitions and ideas of identity and its creation are multidimensional and multifaceted.

Eisenberg et al. (2016) defined identity as to how one positions oneself in the world using language and action. The current concept of identity is genuinely knowing oneself. Individuals

have multiple and, often, unchosen identities ranging from gender, class, race, and geographical location. Categorization is the way people make sense and bring order to their world and self-knowledge. Social identity theory focuses on how people create an identity based on their surroundings by categorizing, applying meaning, and interpreting symbols. In essence, identity is using external and internal factors to define self (Gould, 2010; Maddalena, 2013).

Identity creation is a communal and relational act of personal development situated in time and place (Buckingham, 2008; Howard, 2000; Maalouf, 2012; Proctor, 1996). Varying theories exist in an attempt to explain how identity is created. Gregg (2011) and Monceri (2009) respectively argued that stories' interpretation shapes individual identity. Gillard and Hartman (2019) and Fleischer (2005) suggested that identity creation is a process of self-discovery, self-construction, and reflection. The common consensus is identity, personal identity, and collective identity are created and communicated with language, usually in narratives and stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Howard, 2000; Said, 2014; Schman, 1984; Wessels, 2015).

Identity is a vast concept that impacts all individuals in the quest to communicate self internally and externally. When individuals contemplate the "why" behind who they are and their society, they begin to interpret their identities and reality. Identity creation can be viewed as a cyclical process of negotiation and renegotiation of lived experiences that expose individuals to change (Hersted & Frimann, 2016; Kraus, 2006).

Identity can change moment to moment, with some fixed and long-standing identities because people are reduced to specific identities because of generalizations. Haalouf (2014) explored the concept of identity and the need to belong. Identity is affected by the way others view individuals. Dominant groups impose power and ideals to force people to define themselves. The broader one's cultural awareness, the more identities are redefined. Identity is

created over time through narrative experiences as individuals follow and make clear the unknown.

When individuals adhere to only what is known, they succumb to ideological identities, which supports Fisher's (1984) and Weick's (1995) ideas of plausibility. What is known does not have to be true. What is known must be plausible and make sense to the hearer. This fear of the unknown causes people to conform individual identity with a group versus understanding self (Peterson, 1999).

Recognizing identity is a challenge. Maddalena's (2013) study discussed identity recognition through the concepts of figural and narrative identity. This concept suggested a performative aspect of identity by implying that identity cannot be defined by words but by actions. Figural identity is a synthetic process rooted in change. As one experiences and reflects on the change, they engage in creating an aspect of identity. Narrative identity, conversely, requires individuals to attach and interpret symbols to reaffirm who they are. Identity is a performance that does not exist alone. This study suggested that performed gestures are performed with an end in mind because identity is the process of becoming. Individuals work to "become" because there is an implication that a final identity can be achieved rather than an ongoing continual communicable process.

Narrative and identities are paradoxical entities. Peterson (1999) offered that one of the main functions of a narrative is to close the gap between what is known and what is unknown by charting one's path to personal understanding. Therefore, narratives help individuals create understanding through explanation. Since antiquity, humans have used myths for understanding because the myths communicate behavioral norms for society concerning individual behavior and social order. It is the absorption of experiences in line with cultural norms that shape and

fosters identity. The paradoxical nature of identity is individuals transition and gain independence separate from their parents to learn to conform to their surrounding society.

Identity is knowing oneself, and the means of knowing self is reflection. Fleischer's (2005) study looked at senior high school students in a passage to adulthood course. Students answered "big questions" within the course as they prepared for the transition from childhood to adulthood. The course's goal was to teach students who they are and where they are in the concept of the world.

Gillard et al. (2019) urged that identity creation was a process that involved self-discovery and self-creation through reflection. Researchers in this study worked with youths with siblings dealing with life-threatening illnesses from ages 16-18 in a wilderness summer program. This program taught positive communication, self-reliance, and decision making. As students worked through the course, they reflected and communicated past experiences. It was through this reflective process that students made personal discoveries. Additionally, this reflective process allowed participants to consciously create an identity as identity is an interplay between their internal and external selves (Wessels, 2015).

The interplay between the internal self and external self occurs within the stages of the Hero's Journey. The idea of the hero and the myth works as a template of human growth and development. Narratives define an individual's experiences to shape identity. Identity is created respectively within the parts of the Hero's Journey. In the separation stage, the individuals realize their old identity is not sufficient for their current reality, and there is a need for change. As individuals face the trials of initiation, their identity begins to form through the interaction with adversity. By the time an individual makes the return to reality, their identity has been tried and prepared for day-to-day use (Hutchinson, 2000).



Through the narrative process, individuals understand who they are, concerning self and relation to the world. Jones (2014) argued that understanding people is an act of understanding their stories. Therefore, understanding self is the act of understanding personal narrative experiences.

Narratives become the source of personality development and a guide for expressing humanity. The Hero's Journey is a framework to process and understand identity (Campbell, 2008). As individuals progress through the three major parts of the hero's journey, they shape and reshape who they are by facing the reality of who they are. The journey is a change process, and the heroic quest itself is a metaphor for the identity creation process (Holder & McKinney, 1992).

Identity creation is an inward to outward process, according to Branson (2007), in a study of structured self-reflection as it impacts authentic leadership practices. The study suggested that individuals' quests begin within as individuals examine and process inward values and understand the behaviors that create values. Until a potential leader acquires an understanding of self, they cannot create a professional identity. Identity is an analytically reflective process causing one to be mindful of self. Through reflection, individuals make personal discoveries or discover areas in which to make changes. Identity and its creation is an act of mindfulness on behalf of individuals. As people understand themselves, they can understand their position in the world.

### **Professional Identity**

Professional identity, in some contexts is known as work identity, is an extension of personal identity. The merging of the two identities reveals more of one's authentic self (Eisenberg et al., 2016; Sutherland et al., 2010). Kouzes and Posner (2017) claimed that

leadership identity is about self-knowledge and integrating and communicating vision and values in personal and public arenas of living through the negotiation and construction of meaning. Leaders use personal lived experiences to navigate organizations' daily demands (Hersted & Frimann, 2016; Said, 2014). Professional identity is the communication and definition of personal identity concerning professional life. In other words, it is the negotiation between a private self and a work self.

Adams and Crafford (2012) suggested in a study focusing on work identity in South Africa that often personal identity and work or professional identity are inseparable. A personal identity has a direct impact on professional identity and one's professional identity can be their personal identity. They suggest that strategies must be in place to keep the two identities separate for psychological benefits. Identity is a social construct, and personal identity seeks to answer the question, "Who am I?" whereas professional identity seeks to answer, "Who am I in the context of the organization?"

Work is a critical ingredient to building personal identity which was found in a study exploring the shift of work identity of research team members (Smith et al., 2015). The researchers found it was vital for team members to find meaning and purpose in professional activities. It was key to note that professional identity is fluid and based on performance satisfaction. All individuals are in the process of processing self.

Sutherland et al. (2010), in a study of teacher self-image, indicated that professional identity is an extension of personal identity. Professional identity is the act of interpretation and reinterpretation of personal identity as leaders use past experiences to define and redefine current situations for future success. Professional identity is reflexive and influenced by an end goal. External forces require leaders to make choices about who they are for the sake of work.

Professional identity requires individuals to monitor and reevaluate themselves continually. There is a level of visualization that motivates and moves one into an established professional identity. Ideally, the more an individual is aware and in tune with individual personal identity, the more developed their professional leadership identity will be.

Hersted and Frimann (2016) added that in their study of storytelling's impact on leadership identity, professional identity is tied directly to leadership opportunities. Leadership and leadership identity is co-authored through a socially constructed process. This process uses language and communication to communicate and interpret lived daily experiences in constant change. It was asserted that past experiences paired with daily personal and organizational challenges and situations shape an individual's relationship with self and their work to create a more defined professional identity for leadership.

Priest and Seemiller's (2018) study explored educator leadership identity construction through past lived experiences and life perspectives using storytelling, symbolic interactionism, and anticipatory reflection. Researchers looked at narratives that led to shifts in thinking. In the study, participants were recruited at a professional development. Data collection occurred as participants shared past experiences, current beliefs, and wrote letters to their future selves. The researchers engaged participants in a conversation, both formally and informally.

Priest and Seemiller's study confirmed common thoughts on identity and identity creation. They concluded that identity is a narrative process and is a product of one's story-making. Further, they supported the idea that identity is a social creation that occurs through interactions with students, colleagues, and professional communities. Teacher identity is created through reflection and meaning-making processes such as storytelling and dialogue.

Awareness and reflection of identity shaping occurrences can give teachers insight into their professional identity. Through the analytical examination of professional identity, individuals gain perspective on the influential aspects of beliefs and practices. This examination equips individuals to organize their professional life to make sense to themselves and the outside world by situating them in an understandable place.

Identity, whether personal or professional, is a reflective narrative process. According to Jones (2014), identity creation is developing stories and then understanding the stories that have been developed. In the process, the self is discovered as stories are understood. There are many paradigms and frameworks for understanding narrative. The Heroic Journey model offers a framework for the reflection of the narrative process.

### **Reflection**

The power of narrative and the Hero's Journey is only as powerful as the necessary reflection required to make the framework successful. Reflection is a recurring idea within narrative, the Hero's Journey, sensemaking, change, and identity creation. Narrative experiences must be reflected upon to understand self and ways to improve. A danger in reflection is that people will look for what makes sense to them and what does not, which means that reflection can be biased (Villate, 2012). The results of reflection are a deliberate practice to discover self-knowledge, which does not happen organically. One must take action to understand their values to communicate who they are both personally and professionally. Knowing and understanding oneself is a path to authentic leadership by recognizing the relationship a leader has with individual personal values (Branson, 2007).

## **Walt Disney**

Walt Disney was an entrepreneur, cartoonist, filmmaker, inventor, studio head, and family man whose career stretched through the first half of the 20th century. Walt Disney was born Walter Elias Disney, December 5, 1901, in Chicago, Illinois. His father, Elias Disney, moved the family around the country to pursue what would become failed business ventures. Walt Disney spent his boyhood in Marceline, Missouri. He credited this time with the most influential of his life (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a, 2015b).

After financial failure, he left Kansas City, and set out for Hollywood. His immediate family had already moved to other parts of the country, so to be close to his brother Roy Disney, he moved to Hollywood, California. Together, the brothers eventually created the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio (Biography, 2012; Eliot, 1993; Gabler, 2006; Schickel, 1997; Thomas, 1994; Watts, 1997; Zwonitzer et al., 2015).

Eventually, Walt Disney used his creativity to drive projects, and Roy used his financial prowess to fund those projects. Financial trouble plagued the studio as they lost rights to one of their animated characters, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. With this loss and Ub Iwerks' help, a fellow cartoonist, he persuaded to move west from Missouri; the Disney brothers created Mickey Mouse in 1928. The company's flagship character would star in many of their cartoon shorts (Gabler, 2006; Schickel, 1997; Thomas, 1994; Watts, 1997).

During this time, Walt Disney decided to change the studio name to the Walt Disney Studio as he believed the company's profit was based on his visionary leadership. Success brought new ideas that required innovation as in 1937. The Walt Disney Cartoon Studio produced the first full-length animated feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, with more feature films to follow (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a).

Through disenchantment and disappointments with the movie business, Walt Disney spent the early part of the 1950s making plans to create his world. On July 17, 1955, Disneyland opened in Anaheim, California. Disneyland was fueled by his creativity and the vision for a place for families, and the world could come together. Disneyland would become a paragon to the theme park industry by establishing the operational norm for amusement parks worldwide (Iwerks, 2019).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Walt Disney Company blossomed with projects ranging from film to television to growing amusement ventures that would become the Disney legacy. Walt Disney passed away from lung cancer in December 1966, but he built a legacy founded on narrative (Zwonitzer et al., 2015b).

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed essential literature exploring the ideas and relationship between leadership, narrative, sensemaking, change, and identity creation. Through these concepts' reflective nature, the Hero's Journey model was presented as a lens to understand how narratives can equip individuals to be leaders through self-discovery and self-creation to create personal and professional identity. This review of literature was used as inspiration to create the methodological framework of this study to explore the professional identity of Walt Disney. In the following chapters, Walt Disney's life and career are explored using the provided methodology to understand narrative's influence on personal and professional identity creation.

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

Viewing lived experiences as narrative is an opportunity for sensemaking through self-discovery and self-creation. Using Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model as a lens of analysis to examine Walt Disney's life would expand the scholarship of personal and professional identity creation and contribute to the scholarship of identity creation because more research is needed to understand the influence of narratives on professional identity. The purpose of this study was to examine the application of Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model as a means of professional identity in the life of Walt Disney.

#### **Research Questions**

RQ1: How did each part (separation, initiation, and return) of the monomyth in the Heroic Journey model helped create Walt Disney's professional identity?

RQ2: How does Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model apply to the development of professional identity in the life of Walt Disney?

#### **Research Design**

Qualitative research is an interpretative approach that investigates subjects in natural environments for sensemaking (Flick, 2007). By nature, qualitative research is descriptive and inferential, and it allows greater interaction between the researcher and participants (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2015; Saldaña, 2011). This examination of Walt Disney was suited for a qualitative study to gain insight into individual and social complexity of personal identity creation through Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model.

Due to this study's interpretive nature of Walt Disney's professional identity, a multi-method single case study was appropriate. Case studies can bring insight and illumination to new ideas and learning through an investigative inquiry in human activity situated in a real-world

context. Understanding human behaviors, thoughts, and feelings happen best in the context of occurrence. Researchers must employ interviews, observations, document and record analysis, work samples, or other means of artifact acquisition and collection to place the case in context within the investigation of evidence (Gillham, 2000).

A multi-method single case study allowed the focus to be solely on Walt Disney. Single case studies allow researchers to focus on one person or group with depth, allowing them to examine internal defining characteristics. Focused attention is one benefit of a single case study, whereas the researcher's attention could not be as focused on a multiple case study. As with both types of case studies, newly gained insight, applications, and theoretical discoveries are not guaranteed (Gustafsson, 2017).

The proliferation of primary and secondary artifacts in conjunction with Walt Disney's mythical status as a leader and creator made Walt Disney the primary choice for this multi-method single case study. Quality leaders have spanned space and time, and the analysis and application of Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model could apply to any leader. Purposive sampling was used because information-rich cases are central to this sampling type. One can learn vital information as it concerns the overall purpose of research (Pickard, 2017). More specifically, *a priori* sampling was used to select Walt Disney based on the three main parts of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey model: separation, initiation, and return (Campbell, 2008).

General living occupies space within the Heroic Journey model. As individuals experience life events, in particular change, they embark on a hero's journey. Individuals can live multiple heroes' journeys within their lifetime (Campbell, 2008; Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). Unlike Walt Disney, not every leader's life is as documented as Walt Disney's through his communication, television and radio appearances, and other manifestations of his life, work, and



legacy. Disney's impact continues to be relevant in society more than half a century after his death.

### **Data Collection Strategies**

The researcher included three distinct modes of data collection: document review, historical research, and observation.

### **Document Review**

Documents transcend time and place and allow information to travel generationally. The representation of ideas, events, objects, or persons is the primary function of documents as artifacts are produced based on societal processes. Texts, photographs, drawings, graffiti, or any other manifestation of a particular society or individual can be considered documents. One major weakness of using documents in research is understanding the document's representation in the context of creation (Have, 2004). Documents rarely stand alone, but they are quality sources of understanding situated within time and place (Mayan, 2009).

This study included the examination of primary and secondary documents concerning the life of Walt Disney. Documents fell into two distinct categories: primary documents and secondary documents. The primary documents represented Walt Disney in his own words through personal and business correspondence and communication, television and radio appearances and interviews, print interviews and articles, and first-person accounts from Walt Disney or persons who knew and worked with him. Secondary resources included biographies and documentaries that provided interpretation for the primary resources and placed them in a historical and social context. Secondary resources used artifacts and primary resource material from the Walt Disney Archive and other notable repositories.

## **Historical Research**

Historical research preserves past occurrences for future examinations. The purpose of historical research is to recreate the past by using primary and secondary documents. There are four stages of conducting historical research: understanding the sources, searching and collecting sources, source criticism and analysis, and dissemination (McDowell, 2013). Researchers look at past events within context to better understand the past for the present and the future. Historical research usually depends heavily on five primary source data types: documents, oral records, artifacts, photographs, and quantitative records. Secondary source documents fill the gaps in information (Pickard, 2017).

Ephemera primary source data was from the Walt Disney archive, the State Historical Society of Missouri, the Ruth Disney Beecher Collection, and some private collectors in this study of Walt Disney's professional identity. Walt Disney's video recordings in terms of interviews and vintage Disney programming were on video streaming platforms like DisneyPlus and YouTube.

## **Observation**

According to Pickard (2017), non-participant observation requires the researcher to become "wallpaper" to observe and later interpret happenings within a situation objectively. The researcher becomes a witness of the here and now.

For this study, the researcher visited Marceline, Missouri, Walt Disney's boyhood hometown. Marceline is home to The Walt Disney Hometown Museum, the repository for the Ruth Disney Beecher collection, and other Disney sites such as the Disney Family farm and dreaming tree, the Disney Farm Arboretum, Walt Disney United States Post Office, Walt Disney

Complex, and Walt Disney Elementary. Disney made contributions and visits to Marceline throughout his life and career.

### **Data Analysis Strategies**

Data analysis for this study included the evaluation, coding, and recoding of primary and secondary documents, the visitation of critical historical Disney sites, and the exploration and application of the Heroic Journey model originated by folklorist Joseph Campbell. A case study of Walt Disney was an effective way to apply Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model as a lens to understand the influence of narrative experiences on professional identity. Walt Disney's life and career were viewed as a series of narrative experiences to apply this lens. These experiences were analyzed using the three main parts of Campbell's model, separation, initiation, and return. These three elements worked together to explore Walt Disney's professional identity from a narrative perspective.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Campbell's Hero's Journey is a complex process. It is grounded in Freudian psychology and uses myth and psychoanalysis to describe the hero's journey. For this case study of Walt Disney, the Hero's Journey model was simplified to focus on the three main parts of the Heroic Journey: Part I: Separation, Part II: Initiation, and Part III: Return, and five of the seventeen steps of the monomyth as identified by Campbell appropriately situated within the three parts: (a) the call to adventure, (b) finding your path, (c) the trial of trials, (d) the woods between the worlds, and (e) the return and the ceremony of passage.

### **Heroic Journey Model**

The Heroic Journey model has become an interdisciplinary model to examine transformation (Holmes, 2007). The Heroic Journey model lends itself to a life philosophy or

mindset of discovery, whether through formal research or personal quests to understand oneself. For this model to be a useful lens of understanding, the user and the witness must view processes and events as narrative experiences. A part of the Heroic Journey model aimed to allow individuals to understand and recognize the critical patterns of stories and narratives for sensemaking.

The model simplified Campbell's ideas for this study. Collected data, documents, historical research, and observations were coded using the monomyth's critical stages. This simplification was inspired by Murray's (2009) study of graduate students in a major university self-knowledge course. In this study, the researcher examined students in a college course focused on self-exploration to examine personal experiences in specific stages and parts of the monomyth. Specifically, students focused on the call to adventure in the first part (separation) of the journey, finding your path, and the trials stage in part two (initiation), and the return in the last part. The course's purpose was to provide students with opportunities for self-discovery and self-knowledge.

### **Quality and Rigor**

To add to this study's credibility, the researcher conducted previous research for a master's thesis exploring storytelling's role and influence on cultural identity through narratives and stories. The focus of this study was on the narrative's impact on southern culture and identity. The research goal was to examine how individual and cultural identity is transmitted through the social construct of narrative as stories were generationally shared.

Triangulation uses multiple data sources by a researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014). Triangulation was used for this study to ensure credibility, confirmability, and internal validity in the form of document review, historical

research, and observation in addition to previous storytelling research experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Triangulation, 2019). Using two or more collection methods for analysis helps understand and validate collected data.

Discovered data in the form of historical research, primary and secondary documents, and the visitation of Disney sites and repositories contained elements of narrative's influence on the personal identity creation of Walt Disney. With historical research, inarticulation of the data collection process and analysis is a methodological weakness. However, transparency in data collection and the clarity of research questions govern the study and add to its credibility (Langtree et al., 2019). Along with observations, the collected primary source data was analyzed and compared with existing secondary source data. Many biographical publications about Walt Disney used similar, if not, identical sources from the Walt Disney archive and other reputable archives. Many of the biographies include detailed notes and cross-reference material. Primary source material further enhanced this study's confirmability in conjunction with secondary source analysis and discussion.

Data was coded and recoded to ensure the data supported the coding categories inspired by Campbell's Heroic Journey model and provided dependability for this study. Thick descriptions of contextual details and social meaning of narrative experiences related to Walt Disney's professional identity, as evaluated by Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model, provided a framework for individuals to evaluate personal influential and narrative experiences for identity creation. The framework provided a tool to examine individual identity and leadership identity through past narrative experiences.

This study can be replicated as the Heroic Journey model can be applied to any leadership scenario. Leaders do not have to be as well-known as Walt Disney. All the stages

outlined in Campbell's model are relatable to all individuals due to the narrative's ubiquitous nature.

### **Ethical Considerations/Role of the Researcher**

The researcher in this study was an observer and interpreter. Primary and secondary data included in this study existed prior to formal inquiry. Looking at primary and secondary documents, the researcher observed sites that impacted Walt Disney as a person and witnessed Walt Disney's current impact on a place. This data was open for interpretation by the researcher based on specific criteria.

Due to the research's subjective nature, bias was a danger and concern to data interpretation. Chenail (2011) said that researchers could be blind to their own biases. As research began, the researcher discovered the dual nature of Walt Disney. The "Uncle Walt" persona of Walt Disney was an ethical dilemma for the researcher to address. Walt Disney mythologized himself that the personal Walt Disney was not necessarily the public Walt Disney (Gabler, 2006). Walt Disney was a beloved figure by some and a villain to others (Zwonitzer & Jennings, 2015a). A challenge of this study was determining the truth in contrast to perceived legend.

Oversaturation on behalf of the researcher with the subject was another danger to bias within the study. Walt Disney was a familiar figure in the researcher's home from childhood to the present. He grew up knowing and consuming Disney history, lore, and products and visiting Disney Parks. From an early age, the researcher did personal research and deemed Walt Disney a personal hero. That interaction and familiarity with Disney produced a potential conflict while examining and interpreting data.

## **Chapter Summary**

The Heroic Journey model was the theoretical framework to examine the leadership identity of Walt Disney. The researcher used triangulation in document review, historical research, and observation to code and recode data using Campbell's framework to enhance the credibility, confirmability, and internal validity of this study. The following chapters will report the findings and conclusions of the analyzed data.

## **Chapter 4. Findings**

The purpose of this study was to examine the application of Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model as a means of professional identity creation in the life of Walt Disney. The first major step in the coding process was reframing Walt Disney's life as a narrative. Walt Disney's life and experiences were treated as stories and narratives and analyzed using the Heroic Journey model's parts and stages. In that process, influential events emerged as potential influences to his personal and professional identities.

This chapter contains the results of the multi-method single case study of Walt Disney to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How did each part (separation, initiation, and return) of the monomyth in the Heroic Journey model help create Walt Disney's professional identity?

RQ2: How does Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model apply to the development of professional identity in the life of Walt Disney?

This chapter includes a discussion of the sample, data collection, the process used for analysis, and a discussion that the analysis conducted was consistent with the methodology. The analysis ties back to the research questions while using graphics to present detailed visuals, code, and theme data found within Walt's narrative experiences.

### **Data Collection**

### **Document Review**

Primary and secondary documents concerning the life of Walt Disney were reviewed for this study. Documents fell into two categories: primary documents and secondary documents. The primary documents viewed represented Walt Disney in his own words through personal and business correspondence and communication, television and radio appearances and interviews,



print interviews and articles, and first-person accounts from Walt Disney or persons who knew or worked with him. Leading secondary resources included biographies and documentaries that provided interpretation for the primary resources and placed them appropriately in context. Secondary resources used artifacts and primary resource material from the Walt Disney Archive and other notable repositories.

Several biographies and academic explorations provided insight on the influence, life, and history of Walt Disney. Gabler (2006) offered a comprehensive look at Walt Disney. In contrast, some of the Disney published biographies feed the myth and nostalgia that Walt Disney himself created. Gabler is considered one of two individuals to have read and accessed most if not all the Walt Disney Archive contents.

### **Historical Research**

Walt Disney's professional identity, ephemera primary source data was from the Walt Disney archive, State Historical Society of Missouri, Ruth Disney Beecher Collection, and private collectors. Many video recordings were on video streaming platforms like DisneyPlus and YouTube.

### **Observational Data**

I visited Marceline, Missouri, in June 2020 to have first-hand experience in Walt Disney's boyhood hometown. Marceline is home to The Walt Disney Hometown Museum (Figure 1), the Ruth Disney Beecher collection repository. The museum is in the Santa Fe Railroad station, which did not exist when Walt Disney lived there as a child, but it welcomed him back on several returns to Marceline as an adult. Marceline is home to the Disney Family Farm (Figure 2) and dreaming tree site (Figure 3). The original Disney Family farmhouse (Figure 4) and a recreation of the Disney barn (Figure 5) exists in conjunction with the Disney Farm Arboretum.

The Walt Disney United States Post Office (Figure 6) sits just off Main Street (Figure 7), which was the inspiration for Main Street, USA at Disneyland and other Disney parks. Outside of town are the Walt Disney Complex and Walt Disney Elementary (Figure 8). Walt Disney made contributions and visits to Marceline throughout his life and career. Marceline's current existence is tied to the legacy of Walt Disney. Other than the post office and museum, he contributed to the creation or dedication of each of the city's Disney sites. On this same trip, I visited the location of one of the first Disney studios (Figure 9) and the Disney family home (Figure 10) in Kansas City, Missouri.

**Figure 1**

*Walt Disney Hometown Museum in the former Santa Fe Railroad Station*



**Figure 2**

*The Disney Family Farm*



**Figure 3**

*Dreaming Tree*



**Figure 4**

*The Disney Family Farmhouse*



**Figure 5**

*Disney Barn*



**Figure 6**

*The Walt Disney United States Post Office*



**Figure 7**

*Main Street in Marceline, Missouri*



**Figure 8**

*Walt Disney Elementary School in Marceline, Missouri*



**Figure 9**

*Early Disney Studio Location in Kansas City, Missouri*





## Figure 10

*Disney Family Home in Kansas City, Missouri*



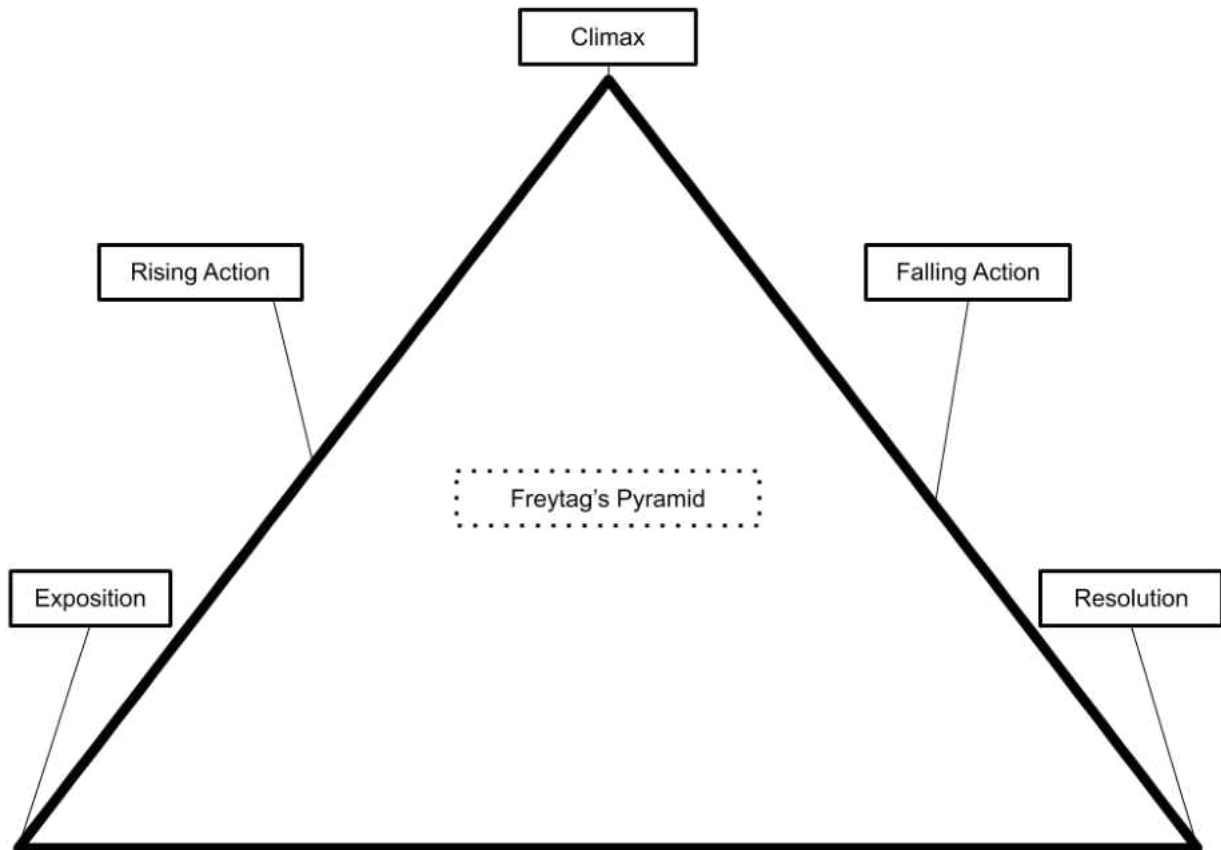
## Data and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine the application of Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model as a means of professional identity creation in the life of Walt Disney. The expansion of narrative scholarship and its influence on creating personal and professional identity was the purpose of this qualitative multi-method single case study.

All the happenings and experiences within his life needed to be treated as a story. His life from birth to death is Walt Disney's overarching narrative because he was born, he lived a full life, and he died. Viewing his life as a narrative in that respect provides evidence of plot structure with a natural beginning, middle, and end. It fits the idea of a Freytag's Pyramid (Figure 11).

**Figure 11**

*Freytag's Pyramid*



In 1863, Freytag suggested a visual representation for a narrative. He suggested that every story has an exposition that sets the scene that moves to the rising action that progresses the narrative toward the climax. The climax would be the most exciting point in the story. From there, the falling action included events that result from the climax. The story ends with the resolution where all the problems experienced are solved (Metz, 2015).

The exposition in Walt Disney's case could be his life from birth through his teenage years as he was in his formative stages. The rising action leading to the climax for Walt Disney could be the years he spent building his artistic abilities. Events then lead to the story's climax,



which can be highly subjective in Walt Disney's case. Walt Disney's climax could be the creation and execution of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* or the creation of Disneyland.

The falling action begins to establish a new "normal" within the story's life, which leads to the resolution of encountered problems. In traditional tales, everything ends with conflicts resolved and a happy ending. The resolution is optional in storytelling because not all stories have closures (Abrams & Harpham, 2014).

This example provided a traditional plot by providing a clean beginning, middle, and end to Walt Disney's life. However, it was evident through the data that Walt Disney's life was complex. In turn, all human lives are complex, and the Freytag concept is one dimensional, looking only at the elements of the plot (Ellis, 2012; Jago, 2004). He lived his life by ambition and curiosity, which made real the created world that lived within his imagination. The traditional Freytag's Pyramid did not communicate nuances of Walt Disney's story to understand who he was personally or professionally.

Campbell's Heroic Journey model was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Rooted in folkloristics, the Heroic Journey model used narrative experiences as a means of personal self-discovery and self-construction, which introduced the narrative's reflexive nature (Murray, 2009). In the model, Campbell (2008) suggested that the world's myths were not a series of differing myths but one myth, the monomyth, played out differently across cultures.

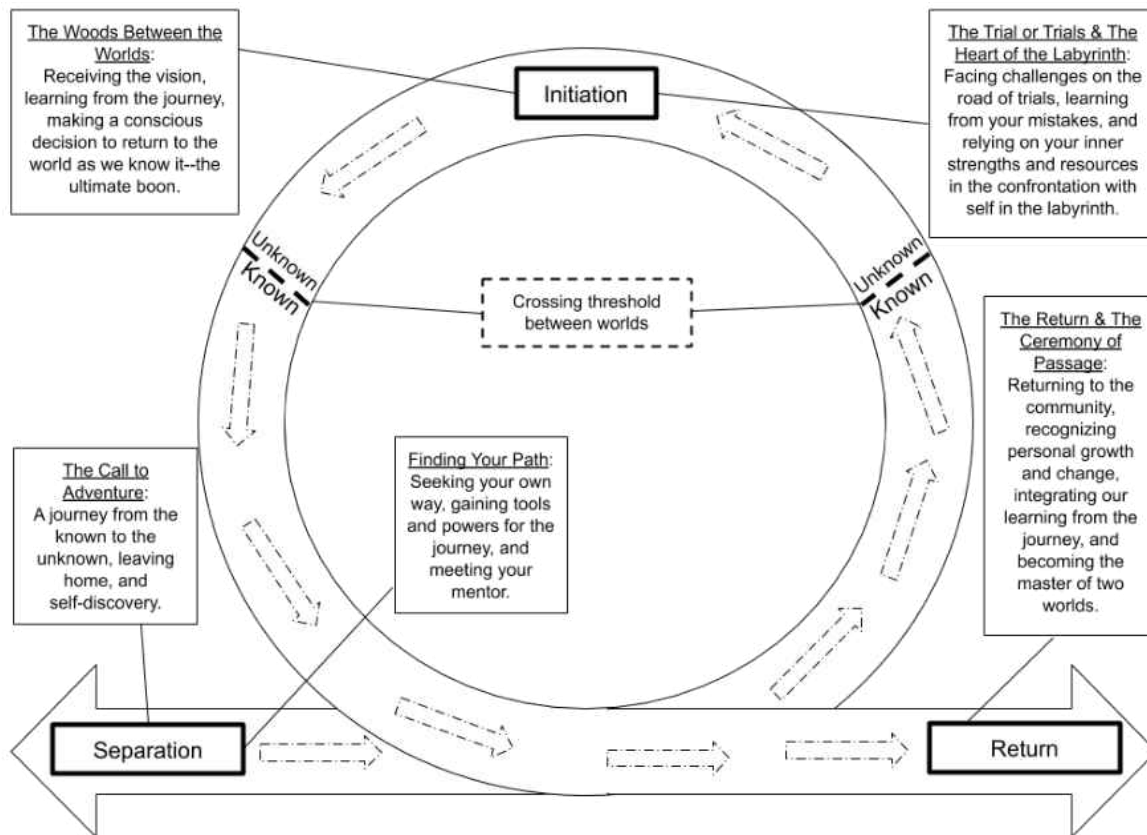
This study applied the monomyth to the life of Walt Disney. The monomyth is broken into three parts (separation, initiation, and return), with 17 stages dispersed across the parts. The Heroic Journey model states that all heroes leave their familiar world, progress through trials, and return home with new learning for change. This framework was applied to Walt Disney's life to look at the narrative influence on professional identity. The coded data were evaluated using a

simplified version of the Heroic Journey model used in a university-level self-discovery course (Murray, 2009).

Both secondary and primary sources were coded to look for specific characteristics housed in each part of the Heroic Journey model. A loop was used to demonstrate the Heroic Journey model (Figure 12) visually. The figure's loop communicates the symbolic nature of the transformation that occurs to the hero as a part of their journey.

**Figure 12**

*The Heroic Journey Model*



In the separation stage, the hero begins in a known reality. Through force or recognition, the hero embarks on a journey for the need of change. The hero seeks a path and gathers the skills needed for the journey through personal experiences or mentors' help. Then, the hero progresses to the initiation stage, where the hero encounters trials and learns from mistakes to gain power from within themselves. The hero begins to learn from experienced trials, and gains a vision for a new reality based on what was encountered and learned. Finally, the hero makes the return home with new knowledge gained from the journey's experiences to induce lasting change within their world.

As the hero reenters the community, they bring change from their experiences. They can be the master of two worlds where the hero understands the world from which they came while understanding the new world by integrating newly gained knowledge. In other words, the hero leaves the known world and is transformed through the trials of initiation to reemerge as an enlightened person to create a new world based on knowledge and learning.

**RQ1: How did each part (separation, initiation, and return) of the monomyth help create Walt Disney's professional identity?**

When applying the Heroic Journey model to someone's life's narrative, it became evident that the Heroic Journey model does not have clear lines between parts and stages. Also, there is a level of subjectivity when organizing events within the parts—the closer examination of one's life, the more overlap that is evident. Depending on the examined incident, events may not be distributed equally across the parts. Some parts may be more defined than others.

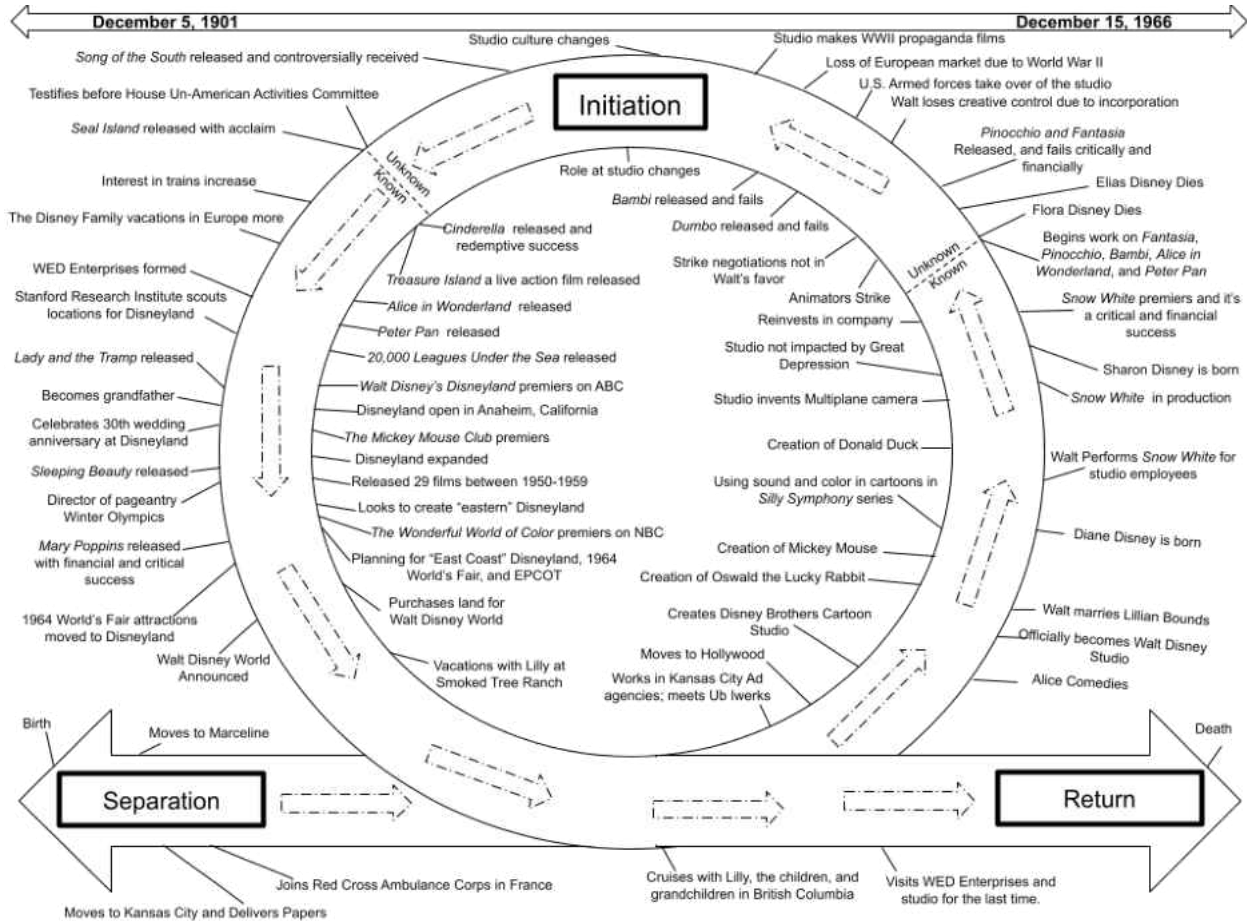
The various organization of events within the Heroic Journey model speaks to the idea that life is the composition of multiple heroes' journeys. In contrast, classical stories usually highlight only one heroic journey at a time. In Walt Disney's case, his identity and professional

identity faced particular challenges even when the identities overlapped. For example, the first part, separation, categorized Walt Disney's life as a time of learning and collecting experiences that would aid him throughout his life. While in this part, he experienced all three parts of the Hero's Journey (separation, initiation, and return) both personally and professionally and at the same time in some cases.

Looking at the overview of Walt Disney's life, he experienced the hero's transformation, as discussed in Campbell's Hero's Journey. Decades from his life can be organized within respective parts of the Heroic Journey model. In Figure 13, Walt Disney's life was plotted in the loop representing the Hero's Journey. At the top, there is a line indicating the time in chronological order running from December 5, 1901, through December 15, 1966. Within the loop are the events that comprised Walt Disney's life. The first part, separation, represents 1901-1940. The second part, initiation, represents 1940-1950, and the third part, the return, represents 1950-1966. Appendix A contains a coded chronological timeline of his life, indicating personal and professional events concerning the Heroic Journey model.

**Figure 13**

*The Life of Walt Disney in the Heroic Journey Model*



**Part I: Separation (1901-1940)**

Looking at an overview of Walt Disney's life within the Heroic Journey model, the first part, separation, lasts from his birth, December 5, 1901, until about 1940. The exact dates are not precise due to the interconnectedness of events. Within this stage, he experienced many of the thresholds faced within childhood and the progression into adulthood. He had personal growth and learning experiences and collected experiences that would later be helpful in the future. It was at this time that he created the foundation of who he was to become.

## **A Midwestern Identity**

The relationships with family were foundational to Walt Disney. Eddy (1955) featured him in an issue of *The American Magazine*. He discussed Walt's parents Elias and Flora and attributed an early departure on behalf of the older Disney brothers on a stringent homelife:

He came up the hard way. His parents were Elias Disney, an Irish-Canadian, and Flora Call Disney, of German-American descent. Elias Disney was a stiff-backed socialist, almost fanatically religious, an old-fashioned family martinet who imposed such severe discipline on his children that the two oldest boys, Herbert, now sixty-six, and Raymond, sixty-four, left home when very young. Herbert spent his life as a Los Angeles mail carrier, retiring recently. Raymond is an insurance broker at Burbank, California, with an office near the studio, and handles much of the company's business (p.114).

The article also alluded to the fact that the Disney siblings were all successful in their respective rights.

When Walt Disney was about five, the family moved from Chicago to Marceline, Missouri. In an interview, he talks of the significance of that move and the experience.

I haven't always lived in a city...When I was five, my family moved out of Chicago, and we went to Marceline, Missouri, where my father had bought a farm. We lived there six years, and I guess it must have made a deep impression on me. I can clearly remember every detail--just as if it had been yesterday. I even remember the new things that I saw as I looked out of the window. You see, I had never been to the country before. (Kent, 1938, 16).

In a personal letter to the Chamber of Commerce director in Marceline, in 1946, Walt Disney reflected on his time there as a child (W. Disney, personal communication, August 7, 1946).

I am most sincere when I say that probably the deepest impression I have retained through my adult years is of the days I spent on our farm in Marceline. My trip back there this spring was a nostalgic tonic to me...

Marceline introduced Walt Disney to imagination. When not working, he spent much of his time at a tree on the Disney property and creating and performing shows in the Disney barn. There he would dream and draw. His aunt would buy him tablets of paper and encourage his creativity (*Ladies' Home Journal*, 1941). He even sold his first drawing to a neighbor.

Walt Disney did not want to be like his father, Elias (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a). Elias was not a fan of whimsy but insisted that there is always work to be done. In a letter to the Marceline Chamber of Commerce, he (1966) said:

You know I was a youngster in Marceline, and there wasn't much time for anything but work, and there was always plenty of that. The whole family had their work cut out for them every minute from dawn to sundown, every day.

According to Walt Disney, these positive and influential experiences were a part of the learning of his childhood. Despite being born in Chicago and spending many of his formative years in cities, He connected with Marceline to the extent he considered it his hometown. Walt Disney said in an interview with *The Marceline News*, "I'm glad I'm a small-town boy, and I'm glad Marceline was my town" (1A). He chose to identify himself as a small-town Midwesterner. He would return to Marceline in 1956 and claim it as his hometown (Zwonitzer et al., 2015b).

From Marceline, the Disneys moved to Kansas City. There, Walt Disney enrolled in Benton School [SLA1] and began delivering papers on a paper route his father owned. He would deliver papers early in the morning before school. During the summer of 1917, he became a news butcher on the Missouri Pacific Railroad during the summer. Walt Disney was not a stellar student, but he impressed his teachers with his artistic abilities. During his time in high school, he began drawing for the school newspaper.

Hungering for adventure, Walt Disney wanted to do his part for his country and participate in World War I, but he was too young. With forged documentation, he did sign up for the Red Cross Ambulance Corps. The war ended, but there was work to do in Europe with the war's aftermath. The Red Cross sent him to drive an Ambulance in France. During his time, he continued to draw by putting his art on the sides of ambulances, and he submitted drawings to publications at home that were all rejected.

The events during his sojourn to France and his return home exemplify the overlapping nature of the Hero's Journey. He left the comfort of what he knew in America to travel to an unfamiliar land. He experienced trials in the form of rejection personally and professionally, which would prepare him for the future.

Upon returning home, he hoped to continue his relationship with Beatrice, his girlfriend. However, in his absence, she married another man. He began to focus on his career, and the Pesmen-Rubin Commercial Art Studio hired him. He was officially a working artist, but he was let go after the Christmas rush, which was a disappointment (Greene & Greene, 2001).

He went on to create his studio with a fellow Kansas City artist, Ub Iwerks. They formed the Disney-Iwerks Commercial Artist, which lasted only a month. Kansas City Film and Ad



Company hired the duo and introduced them to crude animation. Walt Disney borrowed a camera from the company to experiment with film and animation in his private time.

By 1922, Walt Disney was alone for the first time in Kansas City as his siblings and parents moved west to Oregon and California. Trying to be an artistic success, he created Laugh-O-Gram studio, his first official cartoon company. Times were so tight that he had to stay at rooming houses and eventually slept in his office for lack of funds. The company filed for bankruptcy, and he took the few possessions he had and moved to Los Angeles with the hopes of becoming a director (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a). Walt Disney told Muir (1929):

I guess fate was against letting me be a successful cartoonist. Gosh, how I used to envy the guys who were knocking out what looked like big jack in those days, and I wondered if I could ever reach the top. I finally turned my eyes to Hollywood, where I decided I would go and try to become a director (n.p).

Roy Disney, Walt Disney's third oldest brother, moved to California to convalesce after a tuberculosis diagnosis. Walt Disney moved in with his brother to be near family and begin a fresh start in a new place. Walt Disney recounted this time:

My big brother Roy was already in Los Angeles as a patient in the Veteran's Hospital. When he got out, we had more in common than brotherly love. Both of us were unemployed...and neither could get a job. We solved the problem by going into business for ourselves. We established the first animated cartoon studio in Hollywood (Smith, 2001, p.80).

In Hollywood, Walt Disney set up shop in his uncle's garage and began his hand at creating another studio in California. Before leaving Kansas City, he began a series known as the

Alice Comedies where a young girl performed on screen with animation (Schroeder, 2009).

After his move to Hollywood, he received a call from Margaret Winkler in New York ordering more series episodes. This order provided cash flow for the brothers' partnership.

Through the 1920s, the Disney Brothers created animation and grew the company. Walt Disney called upon some of his animator friends from Kansas City to come to Hollywood and work for the company. He recounted these events in a 1959 interview:

I came here in 1923 from Kansas City and couldn't get a job, so I went into business for myself. My brother, Roy, went in with me. We had about \$750. We took a lot of bumps along the way, but we always kept striving for the same goal: How could we best use this medium of the film? How could we use this artistic talent we had developed? We were never interested in how much money we could make, only in how good a job we could do on film (Edson, 1959; p.25).

Again, the early events in Hollywood show the overlapping nature of the three parts of the Hero's Journey. The trials set him up for new opportunities for success. There were times when events were indistinguishable within the parts. In other words, trials could be taken for separation and return.

In 1926, Walt Disney decided to change the Disney Brothers studio's name to the Walt Disney Studio. His rationale was that though he had a partnership with his brother, the ideas created and sold were his. Under the new name, Walt Disney began working on a character to be the star of cartoon shorts to compete with others in the animation world. The *Felix the Cat* series was one of the popular cartoons at the time.

Disney and his team created the *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit* series. This series was going to be distributed by Margaret Winkler and her new husband, Charles Mintz. Before Walt Disney could enjoy the success, Mintz contractually stole Oswald's rights and poached several of Walt Disney's artists to create the series. It was common for the distributor to own the rights to a character and not the artist or creator. He ended up with nothing (Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001; Schickel, 1997; Thomas, 1994; Watts, 1997; Zwonitzer et al., 2015a).

In 1928, Walt Disney, along with Ub Iwerks, created Mickey Mouse. There are numerous Mickey Mouse Creation myths (Watts, 1997). Through the years, he gives different stories at different times. Some stories suggest that Mickey's inspiration came from a mouse that lived in his Kansas City studio. Other tales suggest Mickey was the product of a brainstorming session between his closest artists. Another tale has him sketching a tiny mouse named Mortimer on his way back home for New York City. Whatever myth is true, Mickey was more than a cartoon character:

Mickey Mouse is, to me, a symbol of independence. He was a means to an end. He popped out of my mind onto a drawing pad 20 years ago on a train ride from Manhattan to Hollywood at a time when the business fortunes of my brother Roy and myself were at lowest ebb and disaster seemed right around the corner. Born of necessity, the little fellow literally freed us of immediate worry. He proved the means for expanding our organization to its present dimensions and for extending the medium of cartoon animation toward new entertainment levels. He spelled production liberation for us (Smith, 2001, p.37).

Many of the cartoons of the time had mischievous characters that depended on gags for success. Mickey had a personality that set him apart from the others. Overtime, Ub Iwerks refined Mickey's round anthropomorphized look, and Walt Disney gave Mickey a voice. Together, Ub Iwerks, the artist, Walt Disney, the storyman, and Roy Disney, the financier, gave Mickey a medium to exist, a life, and a personality. Mickey Mouse's spirit became an extension of Walt Disney's identity (Gabler, 2006).

They quickly created three Mickey shorts: *Plane Crazy*, *Galloping Gaucho*, and *Steamboat Willie*. *Steamboat Willie* was released as the first Mickey cartoon despite being the third short created. It was the first cartoon to have synchronized sound and character movement (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a). Mickey became an immediate star and flourished through the 1930s as Kay Kamen merchandised the company's character. Mickey appeared as stuffed animals, and eventually on watch faces worldwide (Eliot, 1993; Gabler, 2006; Thomas, 1994; Watts, 1997; Zwonitzer et al., 2015a).

### **A Growing Disney Family**

As Walt Disney was experiencing professional success, he was finding personal happiness. Roy and Walt Disney were roommates for the early years in Hollywood. One evening in a brotherly argument, Roy Disney had enough and contacted and proposed to his long-time girlfriend in Missouri. Edna made her way to California and married him. Walt Disney became smitten with one of his female employees in the ink and paint department. *Look* magazine recounted Walt Disney's quick romance:

...an Idaho girl named Lillian Bounds, who hired in his studio before their marriage. The studio at that time was a garage, and Disney was in need of an assistant. When this dark-

haired, vivacious girl appeared in answer to his ad, Disney hired her on the spot, and married her soon afterward...friends are likely to point out it is one of the happiest -if least publicized- marriages in Hollywood (Gordon, 1955, p.146).

In the 1930s, consumed with work, homelife was fun. Walt and Lilly Disney spent the evenings of their newlywed years going to different theaters watching cartoons so Walt Disney could see his competition (Gabler, 2006). His identity was not separate from who he was at the studio. The pressure of work and imbalance of life eventually lead to a nervous breakdown. That forced him to slow down. In October 1931, he and Lilly took their first extended vacation, and he took up polo for recreation (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a).

Early in Walt and Lilly Disney's marriage, he was eager to begin a family, but Lilly was hesitant. She was the youngest of many children and enjoyed the freedom they had just as a couple (Isbouts, 2001). The marriage did suffer because of the neglect that he showed Lily by wrapping himself with his work (Gabler, 2006). According to Diane Disney Miller, her mother, Lilly, was unimpressed by her dad. That attitude gave their relationship a greater sense of normalcy (Greene & Greene, 2001).

In the 1930s, the company grew and outgrew working spaces, which moved around Los Angeles. To accompany Mickey and Minnie with a growing cast of characters, the studio created Donald Duck and continued experimenting with color and sound in the *Silly Symphony* series. *Flowers and Trees* became the first cartoon ever to win an Academy Award. "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?", a song from the animated *Three Little Pigs*, a *Silly Symphony* short, was a musical hit as some stated it was an anthem for the times (Eliot, 1993; Gabler, 2006; Thomas,

1994; Watts, 1997). Walt Disney's success was growing out of experimentation. His experimentation and techniques with animation became industry norms.

At home, the Disney brothers' families were growing. Roy Edward Disney was born in 1930 to Roy and Edna Disney. Walt and Lilly Disney gave birth to Diane Marie Disney in 1933 after several miscarriages. Instead of trying for another biological child, the couple would adopt Sharon Mae Disney in 1936 (Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001). The events surrounding the growing Disney family are another example of the Hero's Journey's overlapping nature. Creating a family had evidence of all three parts before establishing a new norm within an era characterized by the hero's separation.

As a father, Walt Disney doted on his kids. He did his best to be home every night for dinner. On the weekends, he and the daughters would go out on adventures. Usually, one-stop was the studio because he liked to prowl around on the weekends and see what his artists were working on (Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001). Amusement parks were frequent stops as well, but early amusement parks were not for the whole family. The parks were often dirty with unsavory management. Early ideas of Disneyland emerged during these trips as Walt Disney envisioned a place where families could come, play, and have fun together. He said:

The idea for [Disneyland] came about when my daughters were very young and Saturday was always daddy's day with the two daughters. We'd start out and try to go someplace, you know, different, and I'd take them to the merry-go-round and I took them different places and as I'd sit while they rode the merry-go-round and did all these things--sit on a bench, you know, eating peanuts--I felt that there should be something built where the parents and the children could have fun together. So that's how Disneyland started. Well

it took many years...it was a period of maybe 15 years developing. I started with many ideas, threw them away, started all over again. And eventually it evolved into what you see today at Disneyland. But it all started from a daddy with two daughters wondering where he could take them where he could have a little fun with them, too (Smith, 2001, p.51).

### **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs**

At the end of a workday in 1934, Walt Disney sent the artists out for the day. He told them to return to a soundstage later in the evening. Not knowing what they would encounter, they were surprised by a solo-performance. He performed every character in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and presented the idea of the first full-length animated feature film from the Walt Disney Studio. Walt Disney felt that *Snow White* was the perfect story, and it was one of the first films he saw in Kansas City (Isbouts, 2001). Soon after the evening performance, the studio went into full production of *Snow White*, and he supervised every step (Gabler, 2006; Thomas, 1994).

Many of the studio's smaller productions were a training ground for bigger projects. In 1937, the studio produced the *Old Mill*, a cartoon created using the multiplane camera. The multiplane camera was invented at the Disney studios to provide a three-dimensional look to the animation by painting aspects of scenes on celluloid sheets placed on glass panes. Animators placed each pane of glass at different distances from the camera. As the camera moved through the panes of glass, it created a three-dimensional effect.

Walt Disney attributed the creation of *Snow White* to the success of the *Silly Symphonies*. He said:

The success of the *Silly Symphonies* gave us the courage for *Snow White*. And you should have heard the howls of warning! It was prophesied that nobody would sit through a cartoon an hour and a half long. But, we had decided there was only one way we could successfully do it, and that was to go for broke--shoot the works. There could be no compromise on money, tale, or time. We did not know where the public would go for a cartoon feature--but we were darned sure that audiences would not buy a bad cartoon feature (Smith, 2001, p.31).

In December of 1937, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was released with great success both critically and financially. The film was art. It depicted the human figure moving with realism. The colors and continuity were unmatched by other animated projects of the time. *Snow White* was a considerable investment for the relatively small studio as it cost roughly \$1.5 million. Within its first release, the film grossed over \$8 million. The film got the company out of debt (Isbouts, 2001).

The brothers, along with the company, were financially successful. The studio grew in number, and their experiences established a new norm for the brothers and the industry. They collected skills through experimentation and the exploration of ideas. As the 1930s came to an end, Walt and Roy Disney looked to the future, but not before experiencing one of the most significant challenges they would face.

### **Taking Care of Family**

The Disney brothers shared their success with their families, and this is evidence of the hero's return as the journey equipped the brothers with success. They shared that success to create a new normal (Cambell, 2005). In personal letters from Walt Disney to his sister Ruth



Disney Beecher, it is evident that they helped the best way they could. In 1934, The Disney brothers sent their only sister \$1,000 for a wedding present. In a letter to Ruth Disney Beecher, Walt Disney tells her that the money is for her, but he offers advice how to spend it. He even encourages her to come to Los Angeles and get married because Ruth wants to keep the marriage a secret (W.Disney, personal communication, June 18, 1934). A few years later, Walt Disney commits to sending Ruth Disney Beecher and her husband, Ted, \$50 a week to help with their house (W.Disney, personal communication, September 24, 1937).

Over time, all the Disney children except Ruth made their way to Los Angeles, leaving Elias and Flora lonely in Oregon. At the urging of Walt and Roy Disney, they wanted them closer to enjoy their growing families. The Disney brothers agreed to purchase a house for their parents in the Los Angeles area. Elias and Flora eventually moved into a home in North Hollywood (Gabler, 2006).

The house had a few issues. Walt Disney would send studio maintenance to fix the problems. At one point, Flora complained there was something wrong with the furnace. Studio maintenance went to look at it and make repairs. The repairs did not work and filled Elias and Flora's house with carbon monoxide. When help arrived, Flora collapsed, and Elias was somewhat unresponsive. Flora succumbed to the gas and passed away. Elias lived about six more years.

Walt Disney would never talk of his mother's death. When his daughter Diane asked about Flora years later, He responded by saying she was at Forrest Lawn and did not want to talk about it. His mother's death was a point of guilt as it was his and Roy Disney's idea that they move to be closer. It was their gift that took her life (Greene & Greene, 2001).

In the 1940s, Walt Disney became experimental with his creations. *Fantasia* became a new project for him after the release and success of *Snow White*. *Fantasia* was an artistic venture in which he would marry classical music with the art of animation. He thought that the next studio features would be as successful as *Snow White* (Thomas, 1994).

Walt Disney experimented with the pairing of animation and fine art by teaming up with Salvador Dali. Dali and Disney had a lot in common in terms of art and artistic vision. They had to communicate with an interpreter, and Walt Disney knew broken French from his time in France during World War I. The partnership produced plans for a film, *Destino* which was avant-garde for the time (Bossert, 2015). The film was shelved in the 1940s, but in the early 2000s, Disney artists turned the original notes into a feature film.

Walt Disney considered animation art and wanted to elevate it as such to the extent he put his animators in studio-sponsored art classes (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a). He did not have the funds to pay for the instruction, so the Chouinard Art Institute conducted good faith classes (Greene & Greene, 2001). He knew that he needed to raise his employees' skill set with future projects. The more animation ventured into realism; the more realistic the drawings had to be. The art classes given at the studio impacted the animation across Hollywood (The Disney Nerds Podcast, 2019).

*Bambi* was an example of the venture into realism. Audiences knew how a deer was supposed to look, so there was no flexibility to Bambi's appearance. Conversely, there was no set example of a dwarf's appearance in *Snow White*. The artists could execute a more creative vision.

## **The Influence of the Separation**

Looking at an overview of Walt Disney's life within the Heroic Journey model, the first part, separation, lasts from his birth, December 5, 1901, until about 1940. Throughout the first part, separation, of the Heroic Journey model, some emergent themes define the hero's separation. Ideas like (a) journeying from the known into the unknown, (b) leaving home, (c) self-discovery, (d) seeking one's way, (e) gaining tools and powers for the journey, and (f) meeting mentors were prominent in these years. He (a) collected experience and chose his identity, (b) sought his own way, and (c) claimed creative ownership.

## **Collecting Experiences and Choosing Identity**

Within this stage, Walt Disney experienced many of the thresholds and life's first experiences faced in childhood. He collected experiences that would later play a role in future situations. It was at this time that seemed to create the foundation of who he was to become.

It was this period that solidified and chose his identity as a Midwesterner. When Walt Disney was about five, the family moved from Chicago to Marceline, Missouri. He spoke to the significance of that move and experience, and despite living in Marceline for a brief period, he chose those years as years of personal definition. This Midwestern identity allowed him to find his audience for the studio's productions (Wasko, 2001).

## **Seeking One's Own Way**

Walt Disney embarked on his professional path against societal and cultural norms of the time. His life characterized persistence as he continued moving forward towards his vision. He discovered art in childhood and later animation. He collected experiences, mentors, and friends

that propelled him forward in different capacities. This period was a time for self-discovery as he discovered his role within his creative company.

### **Claiming Creative Ownership**

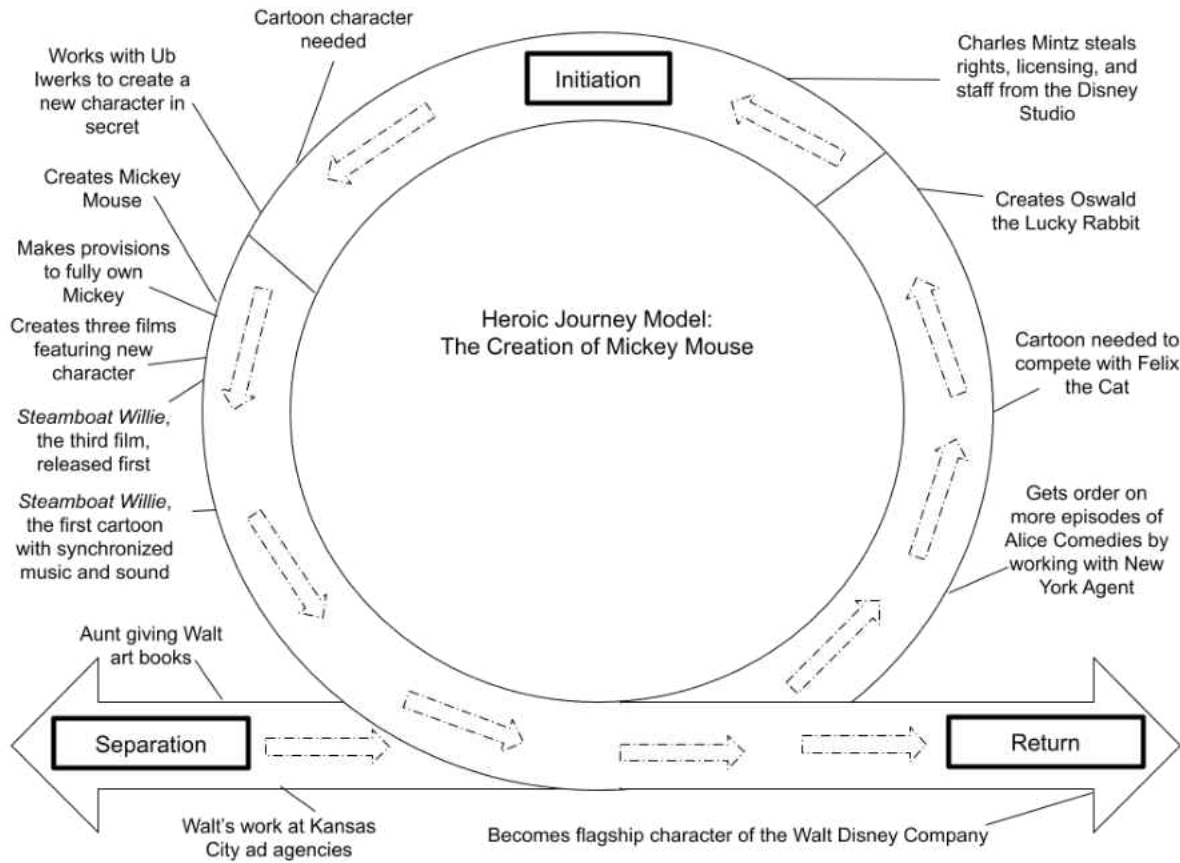
Creative ownership was a significant discovery that emerged. Losing Oswald the Rabbit encouraged Walt Disney to eliminate the idea of a middleman in business. Losing creative rights and artists to Charles Mintz inspired him to encompass every aspect of his creative business, from creation to distribution to merchandising. Based on the data, Mintz's actions were the primary catalyst in creating Mickey Mouse. Walt Disney said in a magazine interview:

I wanted to work without a middleman. Didn't have a dime, but salary offers of \$2,500 per week went in this ear and out the other. They were thinking of the fast buck, but I wanted to build, and not be taken over by someone else, like happened with my *Oswald the Rabbit* series when the New York distributor, hoping to pressure me into a more profitable deal for himself, threatened to hire away my animators. I just said go ahead, take them. I'll form my own company and do something else. I had no idea then that I'd come up with such a winner as Mickey (Ballatine, 2005, 136).

Even though his first 39 years are defined and represent the separation in the Hero's Journey, parts two and three, initiation and return, are active and vital. Continuing with Mickey Mouse's creation as an example, the overlap within the Hero's Journey and Walt Disney's professional identity impact is evident. Figure 14 plots the creation of Mickey in the Heroic Journey model.

**Figure 14**

*The Creation of Mickey Mouse in the Heroic Journey Model*



The separation stage in Mickey's creation consists of early art experiences from Walt Disney's youth and early career. These experiences built his skill as an artist and storyteller. The initiation stage consists of the challenges and trials of trying to have a career in art in the early 20th century with Walt Disney's hiring and firing by various art agencies in Kansas City. When he embarked on his own to rely on his creativity, he went bankrupt and had to sleep at his rented office and could not afford clothes. Persistence provided success with the Alice Comedies by making contacts with distributors in New York City, which led to Oswald the Lucky Rabbit's

creation. The personal and professional trial of Oswald's creation and theft forced him to create something new out of necessity (Gabler, 2006; Zwonitzer et al., 2015a).

The return was Mickey Mouse's birth, which led to Mickey's historic premiere by being the first cartoon with synchronized sound and motion. Synchronized sound and motion became the norm in the cartoon and film industry. The Mouse became the self-proclaimed alter ego of Walt Disney and the flagship character and mascot of the studio (Greene & Greene, 2001). The legacy of Mickey Mouse continues to sustain the Walt Disney Company to the present day

## **Part II: Initiation (1940-1950)**

The 1940s was a decade of trials and initiation for Walt Disney and the studio. He experienced some of his career's most challenging times just before and after World War II. The beginning of the decade was peppered with perceived failure and distrust on behalf of Walt Disney. However, as he approached the 1950s, redefinition emerged as a hallmark of this decade.

### **The Strike**

The studio grew throughout the 1920s and 1930s. It went from a few dozen artists and employees to about 1,500. Out of growth, Walt Disney lost touch and the familial atmosphere of the early studio days. Company growth put him out of touch, and he could not stay abreast of all the happenings at the studio. Unionization talk emerged by the 1940s, and it resulted in a strike.

Walt Disney viewed the strike as a betrayal. He was hurt because he saw his studio as a family. The family betrayed him and wanted to abandon their creation. A similar sense of abandonment happened in the early 1930s when Ub Iwerks left the organization. He perceived

individuals not aligned with his vision against him (Eliot, 1993, Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001).

The impact of the strike lingered throughout the 1940s. At the end of the decade, Walt Disney testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. This committee dedicated its efforts to finding communist influence in the United States. He thought the 1941 strike and the union activities at the studio was a communist orchestration. In his testimony before the committee, he discussed his principles and the sense of community he thought existed within the company. According to his testimony, he felt a sense of responsibility to his employees. Walt Disney said:

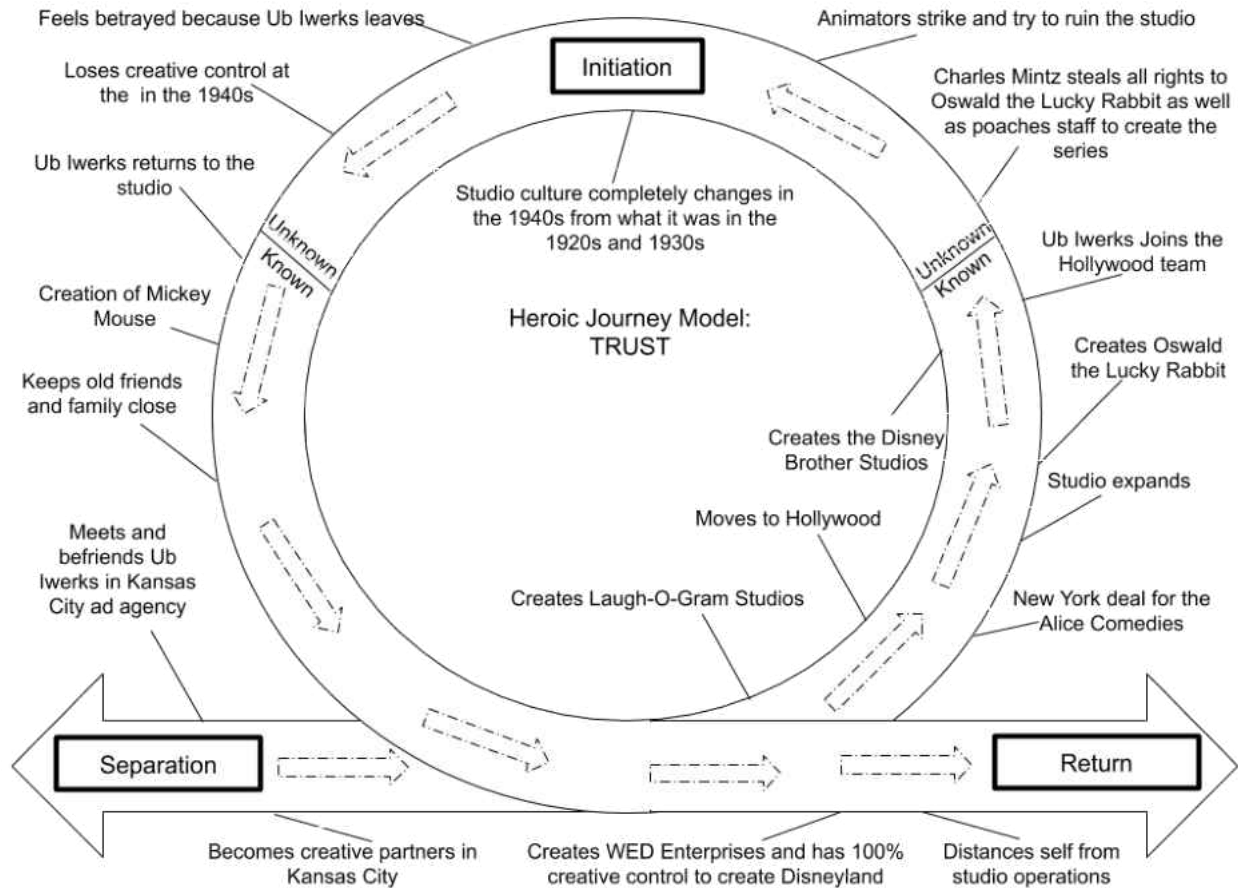
I told him that it was a matter of principle with me, that I couldn't go on working with my boys feeling that I had sold them down the river...it was a matter of principle with me, and I fight for principles. My boys have been there, have grown up in the business with me, and I didn't feel like I could sign them over to anybody. They were vulnerable at that time. They were not organized. It is a new industry (Stripling & Smith, 2005; pp. 15-19).

Before his 1947 testimony, he gave a talk to studio employees. In 1941, Walt Disney thought that if he spoke to his employees, they would reconsider unionization and a strike. He thought the speech would be an inspiration to his employees and build the camaraderie he had amongst his team in the 1930s. He tried to communicate his philosophy and vision of how he ran his company. The talk worked in opposition to his goal. The speech fueled the workers to strike with more fervor, which left him devastated and hurt. This event changed everything at the Walt Disney Studio. After the strike, the studio was very corporate and less familial (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a).

Figure 15 plots the idea of trust within the Heroic Journey model. Plotted here are the significant events impacting Walt Disney's ability to trust.

**Figure 15**

*Trust Plotted in the Heroic Journey Model*





## World War II

World War II erased all foreign film markets that provided the company success in the previous decade. The new feature films were not as successful due to the lack of revenue from the loss. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was not only wildly successful in the United States, but it was successful in Europe and other countries. Also, the stories were not as strong as *Snow White* as he was highly involved in the story and animation processes despite not drawing a single character. The studio workload spread Walt Disney thin.

During the 1940s and World War II, the US Army took over the Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, California, to produce propaganda films for the American war effort. Studio artists even designed insignias for servicemen and allies (Schroeder, 2009). American troops occupied many of the buildings and structures at the studio, so Walt Disney's creation and home away from home were now a place for government use (Thomas, 1994). His created world was no longer his.

Despite the trials of the 1940s, Walt Disney and the studio made advances that correspond with the hero's separation, as outlined in part one of the Hero's Journey. In 1944, He worked with RCA, the owner of NBC, to create a film about television. The war effort foiled production plans, but the planning of the film equipped him and his studio with knowledge about broadcasting. That knowledge would come into play in the next decade (Cotter, 1997). Categorized by trials and initiation, the decade offered new journeys.

The Great Depression did not impact Walt Disney. The only debt the Disney Studio had was the debt he created. He strived for perfection, and perfection had a cost (Greene & Greene, 2001). By 1940, the company was under significant financial strain. The best decision for the

time was to go public. The company began selling stocks and assembled a board of directors. That action took the helm of control away from Walt Disney. With the foreign markets gone, the government and investments were keeping the studio afloat.

South America was getting attention from the Axis Powers in Europe. To combat that attention, the United States sent famous Americans to the region on goodwill trips on behalf of the United States government. The government initially wanted Walt Disney to meet, greet, and shake hands with the leaders and people of those countries. He refused to go under those conditions because he did not feel that he was the kind of person he was. Instead, he agreed to go if he could use the trip as a work trip to experience culture and re-create that culture in his artistic medium. That was approved, so he and studio artists and his wife Lilly went to South America as goodwill ambassadors for the United States (Gabler, 2006; Schickel, 1997; Thomas, 1994; Thomas, 2008).

Walt Disney created several projects from his South American adventures. *Saludos Amigos* is a cartoon film starring Goofy and the *Three Caballeros*, combining live-action and animation. That film starred Donald Duck, Jose Carioca, and Panchito Pistols while showcasing many Latin entertainers (Gabler, 2006; Schickel, 1997; Thomas, 1994).

### **The Decade's Challenges**

Walt Disney's artistic work met challenges. *Fantasia* did not perform as was hoped. *Bambi*, *Pinocchio*, and *Dumbo* did not perform well critically or at the box office. People accused him of taking advantage of government funds by producing films from the goodwill tour of South America (Eliot, 1993; Gabler, 2006).

Walt Disney's personal life was changing. His daughters were growing up. They began living their own lives and enjoying their teenage years, looking toward the future. The quality time he spent with his daughters waned and changed from what it had been with they were younger.

While in South America, Elias Disney, the patriarch of the Disney family, passed away. Walt Disney did not attend the funeral, but he sent flowers and his condolences. His brother Roy Disney thought it was for the best that his brother was not there (Gabler 2006; Thomas, 2008; Zwonitzer et al., 2015b).

Walt Disney's passion project of the late 1940s was *Song of the South*, a retelling of the Uncle Remus tales about Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit by Joel Chandler Harris. He wanted to again combine animation and live-action for a more modern film experience like the Alice comedies of his early career and some of the South American projects (Thomas, 1994). This time he was met with criticism and rumors of racism.

He was disappointed at the reception of the film. It was not as welcome as he had hoped because audiences objected to Uncle Remus's portrayal, a former slave. Some felt that the film was an idealization of slavery overlooking the Southern landscape's harshness, pre and post-Civil War (Gabler, 2006; Schickel, 1997).

Walt Disney was bewildered by the reception because before making the film, he consulted many African-American leaders and scholars on their thoughts and opinions of the film. Feedback was mixed. The biggest complaint was that the script and the film were presented as a final product, whereas they felt the film should be made through consultation. *Song of the South*, too, was a failure among critics (Gabler, 2006; Schickel, 1997; Watt, 1997).

Trials of initiation, defined Walt Disney's 1940s experience when looking at the overview of his life. Perceived failure and challenges emerged as trials. It required him to find inward strength to proceed to learn for the opportunities and happenings of the 1950s. This period was not void of the first two parts of the Heroic Journey model at close examination.

For example, Walt Disney was intrigued by some nature footage from Alaska shot by Alfred and Elma Milotte. They put the footage together and added a story, and the short film became the first film in the True-Life Adventures series. He titled the film *Seal Island*. RKO, the distributor of Disney films, was not impressed and did not want to distribute it. Walt Disney instead booked a theater and showed the film himself to qualify for the upcoming Academy Awards. *Seal Island* was nominated and won the Oscar for best documentary. With this film, Disney assisted in the creation of modern documentary filmmaking (Gabler, 2006; Schickel, 1997; Thomas, 1994).

This event provides evidence of the presence of the first two parts of the Heroic Journey model. The company's previous experiences with stories aided in the application to the nature footage. They met challenges from the distributor, and Walt Disney decided to go in a different direction. That choice led to industry recognition and the establishment of some new standards in the documentary film genre.

### **The Influence of the Initiation**

Part two, initiation of the Hero's Journey, emerged during the 1940s. Walt Disney faced challenges, learned from past mistakes, and gained a vision for the future. He made a conscious choice to keep creating and moving forward despite failure and perceived setbacks. This decade shaped Walt Disney's identity through adversity. He had to learn to evaluate and reinvest in

himself. He became more insulated and private due to the strike and the betrayal he felt from the animators, and the loss of control at the studio. The challenges of the initiation forced him to imagine and create a new world.

Additionally, Walt Disney collected many experiences that would lead to the creation of Disneyland during the decade of the 1940s. He was pursuing personal interests and hobbies, such as attending a train convention that reinvigorated his interest in trains. Travel and relaxation became a regular practice as his role at the studio changed.

### **Part III: The Return (1950-1966)**

Walt Disney entered the 1950s with his most splendid successes behind him. The animation was not like it was initially, and he was more excited about the live-action films (Greene & Greene, 2001). He no longer had sole control of the company, and creatively, his hands were tied financially. For the first time, he was concerned about money and had significant doubts about Disney animation's future.

#### **The 1950s: A New Era**

Walt Disney removed himself from the detailed creation of the animated films in the 1950s. When *Cinderella* was released in February 1950, he was not optimistic or impressed by the film's execution. He kept some distance while it was in production (Zwonitzer et al., 2015b). However, the film proved to be a critical and financial success harkening back to the premiere of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. He could only see the flaws in the film, and the animation was not to the level he would have hoped for (Gabler, 2006).

Nevertheless, animated features continued to be produced through the 1950s. *Alice and Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, *Lady and the Tramp*, and *Sleeping Beauty* followed. Some animated films were in production for several years, and they were too expensive to abandon. The critical and financial successes varied, but the films found an audience. The studio even ventured into live-action features with *Treasure Island* and, in time, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. By the time of Walt Disney's death in 1966, the studio released approximately six films a year.

By the 1950s, Walt Disney's home life changed. Diane and Sharon Disney, Walt's daughters, married, and he and Lilly Disney became grandparents. He was more invested with Lilly, his daughters, and grandchildren. Unlike the 1930s, Walt Disney was taking more vacations and having more experiences abroad. The family would go to Europe several times throughout the decade until his death. They invested in more rest and hobbies. The Disneys eventually bought a vacation home in Palm Springs that would be sold to help fund Disneyland. By the end of the decade, a new Palm Springs vacation home was purchased. Before his passing in 1966, he took several trips, including a cruise vacation to British Columbia with the whole family, including his grandchildren. The 1950s established a deeper appreciation for family, travel, and rest. The Disneys spent many evenings at home in front of the television.

## **Television**

Television redefined Walt Disney's success in the 1950s. As early as 1939, he was insistent on getting television rights for the studio's work. He was interested in the medium before television became a regular part of American life. Many movie executives looked at television as a fad and avoided it (Greene & Greene, 2001).

Walt Disney embraced TV. He saw television as a tool. During the 1950s, the studio produced television specials and series that communicated the Disney brand and advertised upcoming projects. He even went so far as to have programming made in color before color television was even a reality (Eliot, 1993; Isbouts, 2001; Thomas, 1994). Television brought Walt Disney into American homes with *Walt Disney's Disneyland*, *Walt Disney Presents*, and eventually *The Wonderful World of Color*. The first series was essentially a commercial for his newest project (Cotter, 1997).

## **Disneyland**

In the early 1950s, Walt Disney wanted to create a park for families. To test his ability to create attractions, the studio created Disneylandia, a series of miniatures, that traveled about. It provided individuals an opportunity to see elaborately detailed scenes in miniature. This venture was successful for what it was. From there, it grew (Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001; Thomas, 1994).

The park idea had a series of names. At first, it was going to be called Mickey Mouse Park. Then, the name Disneylandia reemerged after the traveling miniature show. Somehow, Disneylandia was shortened to Disneyland. He liked the name, and it stuck.

Walt Disney's first thought was to build a park across the street from the Walt Disney Studio in Burbank, California. Plans were drawn, but the land available was not large enough for his vision. They found land about 27 miles south of Los Angeles in Orange County they felt would be a prime location for Walt Disney's vision through consultation with Stanford researchers. At the time, it was farmland and a series of orange groves.

Walt Disney had a vision for the potentiality of Disneyland and all the things he knew it could be. However, he did not have the funds to make it a reality. He started liquidating what he could personally. He sold his Palm Spring vacation home and renegotiated the terms of his life insurance policy. He was able to sell his vision to some of the people at the studio to get investors. When the company went public in 1940, his role at the studio changed. He was no longer entirely in control, which meant studio expenses needed greater approval. He did not have the freedom to take risks creatively and financially as he once did. To remedy this, He created a new company.

In December 1952, WED Enterprises formed as the creative team behind Disneyland and other Disney attractions. Walt Disney used his initials, Walter Elias Disney, to name the company, and this was the place he felt that he could be creative and play. He stole artists from the studio to be WED employees because he knew they could design his vision. WED Enterprises would later be known as Walt Disney Imagineering (Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001; Iwerks, 2019; Thomas, 1994; Watts, 1997).

To get inspiration, Walt Disney sent WED artists around the country examining amusement parks. One of the biggest inspirations for Disneyland was Tivoli Gardens in the Netherlands. He visited, with friend Art Linkletter. He was amazed at how the park was lit at night. His experience would inspire the nighttime look of Main Street, USA, in Disneyland and other Disney parks with main streets (Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001; Isbouts, 2001; Thomas, 1994).

Through this process, Roy Disney began to pay attention and recognize the financial viability of the new project. Financially, Roy Disney had the idea to sell Walt Disney's name for



use at the studio. Roy Disney's rationale was that the name Walt Disney was as profitable as any film or production the studio could create. A negotiated deal sold Walt Disney's name to the company he created in the 1920s, and that deal would fund aspects of WED Enterprises. Walt Disney was a brand (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a).

Disneyland still needed money. Over a weekend in 1953, Walt Disney had artist Herb Ryman draw a rendering of the new park. It was a bird's eye view of his vision for Disneyland. The park was designed as a wheel with spokes. In the wheel's center was Sleeping Beauty Castle; each spoke of the wheel would eventually lead to a different land: Fantasyland, Tomorrowland, Adventureland, Frontierland. The drawing sold the idea of Disneyland and a weekly show to a new television network ABC.

*Walt Disney's Disneyland* premiered on ABC in 1954 at the same time construction on the park began. ABC's investment translated as a weekly series that acted as a commercial for the upcoming park. Each week, viewers could see what Walt Disney had planned for the park and the progress made. In the beginning, producers searched for a host, but no one connected with the company or the ideas like Walt Disney himself. Perched on the corner of his desk, he would talk to American households on Sunday evenings (Eliot, 1993; Gabler, 2006; Marling, 2005).

Walt Disney used his artists to design the park. At first, he consulted architects, but they constructed buildings that were not his vision. The studio artists understood art and design, and they knew how to use forced perspective and color to make his vision a reality (Bright, 1987; Iwerks, 2019). While Walt Disney spent a considerable amount of time at the park overseeing projects and monitoring progress, he had an apartment built for himself above the fire station on Main Street, USA, to be a permanent resident. The project consumed Walt Disney, much like

films did in the early studio days (Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001; Marling, 2005; Thomas, 1994).

He viewed Disneyland as a living film that was ever-changing and evolving. The filmmaker has one shot to capture everything they want to capture before editing to create a final product. When the film is finished, it is finished. Disneyland, in Walt Disney's eyes, would never be complete:

[Disneyland is] something that will never be finished. Something that I can keep developing, keep plussing and adding to. It's alive. It will be a live, breathing thing that will need change. A picture is a thing, once you wrap it up and turn it over to Technicolor you're through. *Snow White* is a dead issue with me. A live picture I just finished, the one I wrapped up a few weeks ago, it's gone, I can't touch it. There are things in it I don't like; I can't do anything about it. I wanted something alive, something that could grow, something I could keep plussing with ideas; the park is that. Not only can I add things but even the trees will keep growing. The things will get more beautiful each year. And as I find out what the public likes and when a picture's finished and I put it out, I find out what the public doesn't like, I can't change it. It's finished, but I can change the park, because it's alive. That is why I wanted the park (Smith, 2001, p.58).

He wanted the guest to be the star of the show when they visited Disneyland. He wanted them removed from their world and current problems and to step into a world of fantasy and make-believe.

While physical construction was happening in Anaheim, designers, engineers, and craftspeople created the attractions on soundstages at the Burbank studio. Rides were constructed

at the studio and moved to Disneyland when they were complete. The Mark Twain, a five-eighths scale replica of a Mississippi riverboat, was built north of Los Angeles, loaded onto trucks, and made the 36-mile journey down Interstate 5 to Anaheim (DisneyVideoMagic2, 2011).

New technology emerged from the creation of Disneyland, such as the creation of Audio-Animatronic figures to enhance the show experiences for park guests. Audio-Animatronics is a form of robotic animation trademarked by the Disney company. Figures from humans to animals are brought to life through a series of gears, servos, and computers. Audio-Animatronics eliminated the use of actors and created an element of efficiency and consistency in show production (Smith, 2001).

From the purchase and clearing of land to opening day, Disneyland took about two years to build. As opening day approached, Walt Disney faced some challenges of the new adventure. Ticket scalpers, forged tickets, and ladders placed on walls letting people in the park illegally put the park beyond capacity. Concrete was not set before thousands of people embarked on their visit, causing women's high heeled shoes to sink in the pavement. Plumbing delays and issues made him choose between operable bathrooms or drinking fountains. Despite the challenges surrounding the opening, it was televised live on a Saturday afternoon with Art Linkletter and Ronald Reagan playing host. Over 70 million people tuned in to watch the birth of Walt Disney's creation, which was about half of the country's population, and Disneyland soon outpaced the national parks as a major United States' attraction (Zwonitzer et al., 2015b).

Of the thousands that came to the grand opening, Lilly Disney was not one of them; she stayed home. Lilly Disney was never thoroughly impressed by Walt Disney's imaginative

ventures. She did celebrate her 30th wedding anniversary the day before at the Golden Horseshoe Saloon in Frontierland. Close friends and Hollywood notables were among the guests (Gabler, 2006).

Ruth Disney Beecher, Walt Disney's sister who lived in Oregon, also declined an invitation to the grand opening, citing she did not like crowds. He was proud of the accomplishments within Disneyland. In advance, he bought Ruth a brand new television set to see the day's events so she could be a part of the celebration.

Despite the opening day woes, Disneyland was a success. It received its millionth guest just a few months after opening, and people were choosing to plan their vacations around a potential visit. In the years between its opening and Walt Disney's death, the park continued to grow with the addition of rides, attractions, and lands. Walt Disney said in an interview, "The big thing to me is Disneyland. I've started it...not only keep it going...but keep it building to a point that it can never be topped" (Fowler, 2005, 114).

Walt Disney attributed his success to diversification. In an interview with Stan Hellenk, he said: Well, I think it's because I'm diversified. We do television, we do the theatrical things, and again my park, the Disneyland Park. I use the same talent to develop the different attractions at the park that I do to make my cartoons and make my other films here. So it was a wise move some fifteen years ago when I decided that I should diversify (Stripling & Smith, 2005, p. 78).

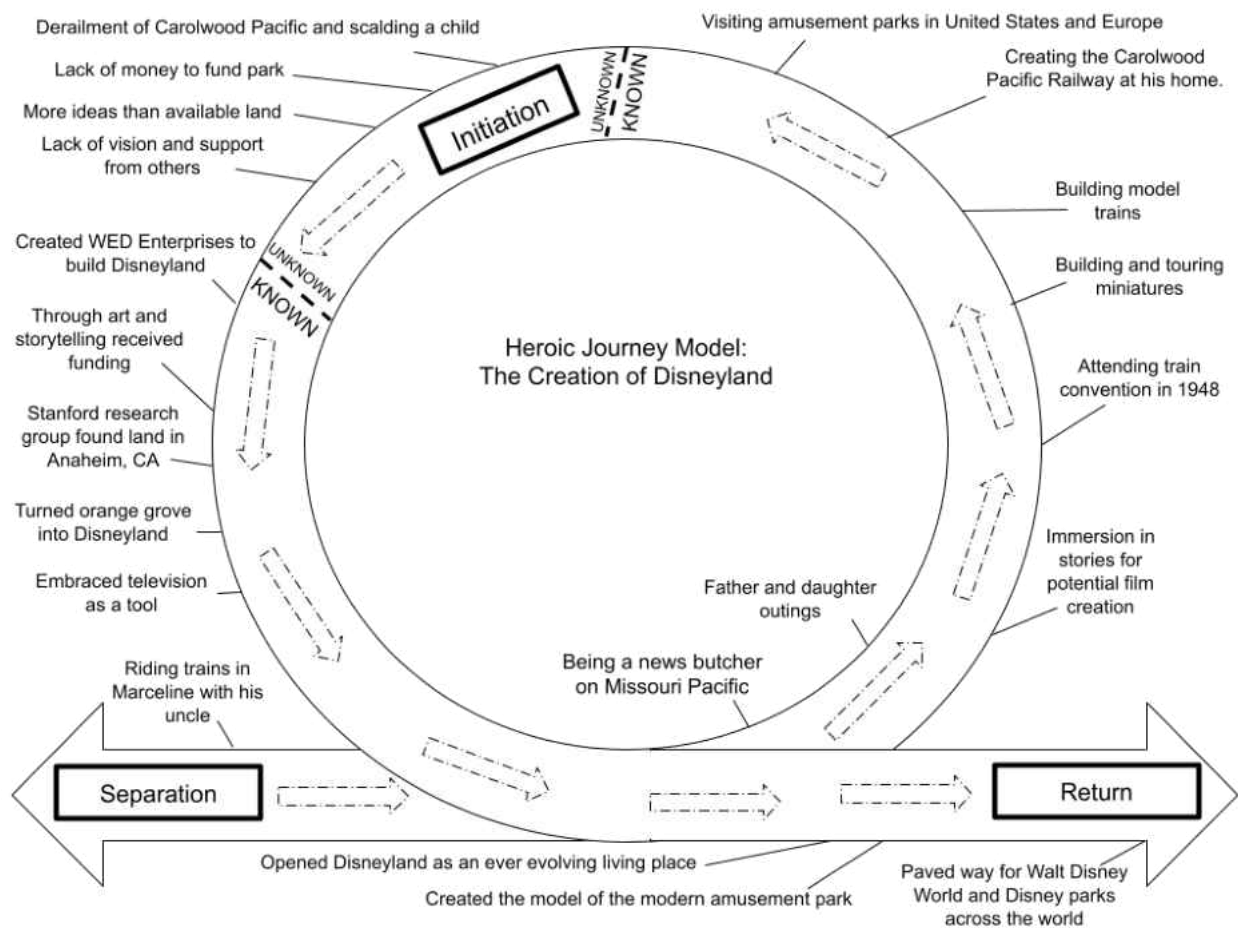
Walt Disney diversified his showmanship talents. He was asked to be the master of pageantry for the 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley, California. The task opened the door to the creation of four exhibits at the 1964 New York World's Fair: It's a Small World sponsored

by Pepsi Cola/UNICEF, Ford Magic Skyway sponsored by the Ford Motor Company, The Carousel of Progress sponsored by General Electric, and Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln sponsored by the State of Illinois. After the fair, the rides moved to Disneyland (Bright, 1987).

Figure 16 depicts the creation of Disneyland within the Heroic Journey model. It is important to note that the parts of the Heroic Journey model can vary in length.

**Figure 16**

*The Creation of Disneyland in the Heroic Journey Model*



## **The Florida Project**

The success of Disneyland made Walt Disney look east to create an "eastern Disneyland." Several locations were scouted in secrecy, from Niagara Falls to St. Louis. He wanted to purchase his family land in Marceline to create a working farm for people to see. Eventually, central Florida was the decided location.

Walt Disney did not want people to know that he was buying land in the central Florida area. He thought that if they knew Walt Disney was the purchaser, land prices would rise. All in all, the Walt Disney Company purchased roughly 30,000 acres or 47 square miles of land, making what would become Walt Disney World the size of the city of San Francisco or twice the size of Manhattan Island (Gabler, 2006; Thomas, 1994; Watts, 1997).

The lack of land was one of the most significant challenges Disneyland faced. The park's popularity made Anaheim and Orange County's surrounding area quickly populate, limiting what he could do. In Florida, land concerns did not exist as it provided an unlimited space for creative potential. He even wanted people to be able to live on the property by creating a city of tomorrow.

The Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT) resulted from Walt Disney looking to the future (Eliot, 1993; Thomas, 1994; Watts, 1997). He wanted to create a domed covered climate-controlled city where people could live where they work and create where they live. He created a transportation system that would get people from the urban center to the outskirts (RetroWDW, 2014). He felt that was the most important aspect of the Florida project:

But the most exciting and by far the most important part of our Florida project...in fact, the heart of everything we'll be doing in Disney World...will be our Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow! We call it EPCOT. EPCOT will be an experimental prototype community of tomorrow that will take its cue from the new ideas and new technologies that are now emerging from the creative centers of American industry. It will be a community of tomorrow that will never be completed, but will always be introducing and testing and demonstrating new materials and systems. And EPCOT will always be a showcase to the world for the ingenuity and imagination of American free enterprise. I don't believe there's a challenge anywhere in the world that's more important to people everywhere than finding solutions to the problems of our cities. But where do we begin...how do we start answering this great challenge? Well, we're convinced we must start with the public need. And the need is for starting from scratch on virgin land and building a special kind of new community. So that's what EPCOT is...an experimental prototype community that will always be in a state of becoming. It will never cease to be a living blueprint of the future, where people actually live a life they can't find anywhere else in the world. Everything EPCOT will be devoted to the happiness of the people who will live, work, and play here...and to those who come here from all around the world to visit our living showcase. We don't presume to know all the answers. In fact we're counting on the cooperation of American industry to provide their best thinking during the planning and creation of our Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow. And most important of all, when EPCOT has become a reality and we find the need for technologies that don't even exist today, it's our hope that EPCOT will

stimulate American industry to develop new solutions that will meet the needs of people expressed right here in the experimental community (Smith, 2001, pp.70-71).

The EPCOT concept did not manifest as Walt Disney hoped, but it reemerged in 1982 when Walt Disney World expanded to include another amusement park. Unlike the fantasy and idealized attractions at Disneyland or the Magic Kingdom, this park focused on learning and world culture. Future World in the front of EPCOT showcased concepts of progress, imagination, and motion. The World Showcase, in the back of the park, celebrated the world's culture (Beard, 1982).

### **Investing Communities**

Walt Disney's project for the 1960s was creating the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). CalArts was a merger of the Chouinard Institute of Art and the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music. He became concerned about his legacy and wanted to create a project that would leave lasting meaning. The institute would create a fine arts community in Los Angeles and train artists to perfect and use their skills in practical ways. The idea was that all artists would live in the community and create in the community (Watts, 1997).

As Walt Disney aged, he became hyper-concerned with his legacy. He was struggling with the idea of time and getting older. He communicated that in letters to his sister, Ruth (W.Disney, personal communication, December 6, 1961). He told his son-in-law, Ron Miller, who worked at the company, that he needed 15 more years with the EPCOT idea to be what he desired (Greene & Green, 2001). His ideas and imagination were a race against time.

By the mid-1960s, he noticed some changes in his health and fluctuating weight. He was learning to relax more, and he and Lilly made the point to travel as much as possible. In the



summer of 1966, the Disneys rented a boat, and they cruised through British Columbia. He took time to rest and enjoy his grandchildren. According to his daughter Diane, he spent time on that trip discussing the future (Greene & Greene, 2001).

His health issues were catching up to him. He canceled an engagement in Marceline to dedicate the midget autopia ride from Disneyland for use in Marceline's park complex (W. Disney, personal communication, July 4, 1966). He had been working with the City of Marceline for about five years to coordinate the ride's donation (W. Disney, personal communication, April 14, 1961). It is the only time that the Disney company donated a ride to an outside entity.

In the winter of 1966, he was scheduled to have neck surgery to correct a polo injury and relieve some of his pain. It was a routine procedure, but the initial x-rays and scans showed lung spots. After a biopsy and tests, they determined that Walt Disney had lung cancer.

He was released from the hospital just before Thanksgiving in 1966, and he made, unbeknownst to him, final rounds to the studio and WED offices. Some of the studio employees he visited said when he left, it felt like the final time they would see him (Bright; 1987; Isbouts, 2001). For the holiday, He and Lilly went to Smoke Tree Ranch, his getaway in Palm Springs, but a health emergency quickly returned them to Los Angeles. Walt Disney, the “wizard of fantasy,” passed away on December 15, 1966, at the age of 65 (Trimborn, 1966). Gabler (2006) communicated the final scene of Walt Disney’s life,

The morning of December 15, 1966 Walt took a turn for the worse, and he expired just before 10:00 am. Walt and Lilly were living at Diane’s old house in Encino as their new house was being renovated. Diane and Lillian made their way to the hospital after a call. They felt the longer it took them to get there the more that time would work with them. It

would make the situation less real. As they arrived to the hallway, Ron Miller, Diane's husband, came out of the room with shock as Walt's lifeless body was there. At the foot of his bed was Roy. He rubbed his foot and talked to him only as a brother could. The earthly legacy of Walt Disney ended (p. 633).

### **The Influence of the Return**

The years between 1950 and 1966 displayed characteristics of the hero's return in the Heroic Journey model. Walt Disney recognized personal growth through change by incorporating consistent habits like travel and relaxation within his life. He found ways to reinvest and return to the community by integrating learning through innovation. Walt Disney found his place within the company and ventured out to create a new reality by communicating vision and making the unseen imagination a reality.

Walt Disney created a culture of curiosity as he told in a personal interview:

I'm just very curious--got to find out what makes things tick--and I've always liked working with my hands; my father was a carpenter. I even apprenticed to my own machine shop here and learned the trade. Since my outlook and attitudes are ingrained throughout our organization, all our people have this curiosity; it keeps us moving forward, exploring, experiments, opening new doors (Ballatine, 2005, 137).

As his identity separated from the company in the 1940s, He had to reinvest in himself and his family. He made travel and rest a habitual practice. He took time to explore the world and took up hobbies such as model trains.

He focused on his legacy and formed and contributed to learning organizations, from the creation of the California Institute of the Arts to the contributions to Walt Disney Elementary School in Marceline, Missouri. Walt Disney Elementary School received books, murals, and even a flagpole from the 1960 Winter Olympics (W. Disney, personal communication, January 11, 1960). His contribution to Marceline, Missouri, was his way to give to the local community where he felt at home. He improved the community by bringing pieces of his life in Hollywood to his boyhood hometown for residents there to enjoy.

**RQ2: How does Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model apply to the development of professional identity in the life of Walt Disney?**

Walt Disney's personal and professional identities intertwined to create who Walt Disney was as a person and a professional. Both personal and professional events and interactions influenced Walt Disney's overall identity when examined using the Heroic Journey model. By reframing and coding Walt Disney's life and times as narrative, it became evident that there was (a) Walt Disney at home and Walt Disney at work, (b) an obsession with control, community, and legacy, and (c) the solidification of Walt Disney's professional identity.

**Walt Disney at Home Walt and Walt Disney at Work**

Two Walt Disneys emerged, the "Home Walt" and "Work Walt." "Work Walt" was one of Hollywood's most powerful influencers, but he did not live the typical Hollywood life. At home, he was fun-loving and kind to those that were close. He was a simple man with simple tastes, and when he was not at the studio, he was at home (Greene & Greene, 2001). He lacked close friends (Zwonitzer et al., 2015b). Gordon (1955) said, "Nothing in Disney's private life is

odd, eccentric, or even very colorful. Stability, predictability, normalcy--these seem to be the hallmarks of Disney at home. At the studio, things are different."

*Ladies' Home Journal* (1941) emphasized the normalcy of Walt Disney's home life:

The Disneys live comparatively modestly in a twelve-room house in the Silver Lake district, a section inhabited by Los Angeles businessmen rather than motion-picture people. Walt likes to roughhouse with his daughters, Diane Marie, eight, and four-year-old Sharon Mae, who is adopted; to act out scenes from such future projects as *Bambi*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and the birth of Jesus Christ to get the reactions of his wife...She and Walt both like family get-togethers, and a Sunday group at their home is likely to include such assorted Disneys as Walt's father, his Uncle Robert, Roy and two other brothers, Raymond and Herbert, who are an insurance broker and a mailman, respectively. Ray Disney handles Walt's \$750,000 policy and all the insurance for Disney employees, but Herbert, the eldest of the four brothers--Walt is the youngest--has no connection with the business. Roy and Walt offered to take him in, but Herbert feels that the fresh air which his calling enables him to breathe is healthier for him; and moreover, he is in line for a pension in a few years. The Disneys are all homespun, unpretentious people, and they consider Herbert's stand perfectly sensible (p.146).

His private life rarely crossed over to his public life. Diane Disney Miller, Walt Disney's eldest daughter, told Greene and Greene (2001) that she did not know her dad was Walt Disney.

Gordon (1955) highlighted Diane's incident:

All this time, Disney protected his home jealously from the glare of publicity. He and his wife have two daughters: Diane, the older, much like her father, and Sharon, whom they

adopted. The story has been told, but is worth telling again, how Diane came home one day shortly after she had started going to school. "Daddy," she said incredulously, "are you the Walt Disney?" When he admitted he was, she demanded an autograph to take back to school to prove it (p.33).

Walt Disney was never impressed by his celebrity. He focused on the production of work. He realized the power he had in business was not true power.

As far as I can see, being a celebrity has never helped me make a better picture or a good shot in a polo game or command the obedience of my daughter or impress my wife. It doesn't even seem to help keep the fleas off our dogs, and if being a celebrity won't even give you an advantage over a couple of fleas, then I guess there can't be much in being a celebrity after all (Kent, 1938, p.16).

He was very different at the studio. The animator's strike changed him (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a). He maintained a stern reputation. Walt Disney said, "I am a patient listener, but opinionated to the point of stubbornness when my mind is made up" (Smith, 2001, p. 261). He was known to have an explosive temper and hold a grudge forever (Zwonitzer et al., 2015b). He would rarely praise anyone to their face but brag to others about their success. He was a taskmaster and a master of story. There was something about him that made employees want to please him, and when he asked, "Can you..." the answer was always, "Yes" (Isbouts, 2001; Thomas, 1994).

In a Canadian Broadcast Company interview, Walt Disney said that his greatest accomplishments were building an organization, good health, being relevant, and accepting the public. When asked if he would do it all over again, he said yes but that he did not want to. Walt

Disney thought his brother Herbert Disney was the smartest of the Disney siblings as he lived a simple life and retired from the United States Postal Service. He believed that happiness was an element of simplicity (The Disney Nerd Podcast, 2019).

Through communication over time, it is evident that Walt Disney's identity connected directly to the studio's successes and work. He communicated that idea in letters he wrote to his sister, Ruth. Happenings at the studio were his personal triumphs:

We are still very busy in the plant with war work but we hope that this year will see us doing much better with our own product. Last year we were short nine subjects in completing the year's quota. This was quite a blow, but we have learned a lot of things since then, and we should make a much better showing in 1944 (W.Disney, personal communication, February 29, 1944).

What was happening in his life was not separate. Through the years, the messages in his letters changed. Over time, there was a separation between what was happening with work and what was happening at home. He struggled with recapturing youth. In another letter to Ruth, 20 years later, he communicated how his priorities changed:

I may not be getting as excited over Studio goings-on as I once did--but I haven't hit the rocking chair either. No, sir. As a matter of fact, I bought myself a jazzy little sports car this year. A Mercedes 230 SL... it's a car for the man who thinks young and I am just the guy for it. I thought for a while I was going to have to fight Sharon for possession (W.Disney, personal communication, December 1, 1964).

## **Obsession: Control, Community, and Legacy**

Walt Disney had an obsession with control, community, and legacy. These three concepts became the catalyst for many decisions he made and the prioritization of the projects he undertook throughout his career. These same ideas were evident in decisions he made within his personal life.

### **Control**

Within Hollywood, by 1938, Walt Disney had a controlling reputation. Kent (1938) wrote:

Of all the glamour-soaked men and women of Hollywood, I was deeply interested in talking to only one--Walt Disney. He owns his company, he takes orders from nobody, and he has never tried to put out anything short of the best. And as far as I was concerned, he was and still is one of the film colony's most thoroughly sincere and honest men (p.11).

He attempted to control every aspect of his life. As a child, he got away from Elias and his family as quickly as he could by joining the Red Cross when the Army rejected him for his age (Eddy, 1955; Gabler, 2006; Thomas, 1994).

Walt Disney's orientation with control stemmed back to his childhood. His relationship with this father was strained due to Elias Disney's high demands. According to Walt Disney, Elias Disney thought there was little or no time for anything but work. He saw his childhood as disciplined. He said,

The home environment was important. We had discipline--you don't have to beat children to have that. Self-discipline is learned by example, and my dad believed in it strongly. We always were self-sufficient, but we had no luxuries--had to earn everything we got, which is good for a boy growing up (Ballatine, 2005, 136).

When Walt Disney's creative opportunities failed, he created his opportunities. He faced failure after failure but was still pushed to the next opportunity. He recognized that he was not the most talented artist, and he thought that he was attempting an animation career too late. Thomas (1975) released a posthumous interview with Walt Disney on a compilation album of interviews with other Hollywood influencers from the early 20th century. In the interview, he said:

Well, I tried to get a job doing anything I could in a studio, so I could learn. I was a little discouraged with the cartoon at that time--I felt at that time that I was getting into it too late. In other words, I thought the cartoon business was established in such a way that there was no chance to break into it. So I tried to get a job in Hollywood, working in the picture business so I could learn it. I would have liked to have been a director, or any part of that. It wasn't open, so before I knew it I had my drawing board out, and I started back to the cartoon. And I was able to secure a contract for twelve of these short films. And I did all the drawing myself...I did--I had no help at all, I was all alone. But I made the first six practically alone. Then, at that time, I was able to get some of the boys that had been with me in Kansas City augmenting the set-up, I was able to eventually build an organization. And it reached a point that I had so many working with me, and there was so much time and attention demand that I had to drop the drawing end of it myself. But I've never regretted it, because drawing always was a means to an end to me. And so



thought these other boys, who were good craftsmen and artists in many different phases of the business... very talented people--and coordinating their talents is what has built this business. And if I hadn't dropped the drawing end of it myself, I don't think I'd have built this organization.

Within the interview, Walt Disney alludes to the importance of teamwork and community within the Walt Disney Studio.

In the creation of *Snow White*, Walt Disney was involved in every piece of the story's creation and animation execution despite not drawing one cell. He determined that the final product fit his overall vision. He was opposed to any type of outside control. He thought that the film industry should be self-governed. He said, "...we do everything our own way, for ourselves, with no outside interference. We stay close to the fundamentals of family entertainment and recreation, and have complete voice in marketing" (Ballatine, 2005, 134).

This idea of self-governance was evident in a letter from a Missouri senator that wanted support for legislation that would regulate the film industry. In a letter responding to the senator, Walt Disney committed to his perspective regarding creative control:

...as a matter of general principle, I am constrained to believe that legislative interference in an industry such as motion pictures might be harmful, and would be more likely to impede rather than further production and distribution.

It is my opinion that the motion picture industry is qualified and capable of regulating itself from within, and such regulation, free from legislative pressure, would be more normal and would avoid undue disturbance and economic burdens (W. Disney, personal communication, March 21, 1940).

The 1940s were a period that Walt Disney lost control. The strike changed his perspective on his work and the trust he had in his employees (Greene & Greene, 2001; Zwonitzer et al., 2015b). He lost control of his family because his daughters were growing up and becoming their respective persons. To regain control, he reinvested in himself. He focused on his hobbies and poured his efforts into areas where he had a total say (Gabler, 2006). With the creation of Disneyland, he reestablished control of his work and creative control of his business.

Disneyland was a way to manufacture controlled experiences for guests by controlling the environment's level of perfection and providing a lens to view the world (Wasko, 2001). On opening day, a guest commented on how perfect and clean everything looked and said it was a shame that it would not stay like that. Walt Disney replied that Disneyland would be so clean that people would be ashamed to litter (Greene & Greene, 2001). When it came to Disneyland, He wanted control of all details, large and small. He said, "Disneyland would be a world of Americans, past and present, seen through the eyes of my imagination--a place of warmth and nostalgia, of illusion and color and delight" (Smith, 2001, p.46). Disneyland only shows the perfect parts of the past while projecting a perfect future.

In the opening day speech at Disneyland that was viewed by more than 70 million people, half of the United States' population, Walt Disney dedicated his creation to the people.

To all who come to this happy place, welcome. Disneyland is your land. Here age relives fond memories of the past...and here youth may savor the challenge and promise of the future. Disneyland is dedicated to the ideals, the dreams and the hard facts that have created America...with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world (Disney, 1955).

To maintain control and uniformity over Disneyland employees, Walt Disney created Disneyland University that would help Disneyland employees learn how to interact with the public and understand a Disneyland employee's demands. He described Disneyland University to Fowler (2005) in a personal interview:

We have what we call the University of Disneyland, where those that are accepted are put on a two week basis of going through the University where they learn all about how to handle the public and our attitude toward the public (109).

Walt Disney himself became a commodity of the Walt Disney Company, especially after Roy Disney negotiated a deal to sell his name back to the company (Wasko, 2001). Critics said that he did not give his artists credit:

Disney has been criticized, too, for gathering a tremendous number of talented people into his organization, making use of their creativity, and putting the whole thing out under the fanfare, "Walt Disney presents..." He used to be an artist, but he does not draw anymore. Neither does he write. He explains, however: "I'm like a bee that flits from flower to flower, taking a little pollen here, a little pollen there, and I build up the honey in the honeycomb (Davidson, 1964, p. 70).

Walt Disney gave a similar answer when a young fan asked him about his role in the company, he said:

My role? Well, you know I was stumped one day when a little boy asked, "Do you draw Mickey Mouse?" I had to admit I do not draw anymore. "Then you think up all the jokes and ideas?" "No," I said, "I don't do that. "Finally, he looked at me and said, "Mr. Disney, just what do you do?" "Well," I said, "sometimes I think of myself as a little bee.

I go from one area of the studio to another and gather pollen and sort of stimulate everybody. I guess that's the job I do" (Smith, 2001, p. 98).

Early in the studio's history, it was company policy that artists did not get credit for their work. A 1941 *Ladies' Home Journal* said, "The fact that his employees rarely get public credit for their work is the result of a policy calculated to prevent interoffice jealousy rather than a desire on Disney's part to hog the show." It was evidence of control over the product.

Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnson were two of the early animators at the Walt Disney Company. Respectively, they worked on animated features from the 1930s through the 1960s. According to Thomas and Johnson, in the early days, he was keenly aware of all the happenings at the studio. If people working on a project worked and got along well, he would pair antagonists together to use tension to motivate work (Greene & Greene, 2001; Isbouts, 2001; Kuniko & Thomas, 1995).

Perfectionism was the "Disney Way" as Walt Disney controlled through the demand for perfection (Watts, 1997). In the early days of the studio, he was involved in every step. In the early planning of Disneyland, he was involved in every step. That involvement led to increased skill and higher quality products. He and the studio's commitment brought animation to limitless possibilities:

More or less unconsciously, we had been preparing for this task for a long time. First of all, we had improved and sharpened our medium, refined our technique to the point where there are practically no limitations of picturization. The animated cartoon could with equal ease and clarity depict the birth of a continent, the rhythm of a stellar system, the structure of an atom or the anatomy of a microbe. What is hidden to the eye or the

camera, or even the most penetrating ray, could no escape the drawing board. Thus the animated cartoon can pierce the atmosphere and show the movement of winds over a continent and the next moment demonstrate on the screen the flow of an eclectic current (Disney, 1945, p.120)

He created a legacy of perfection by setting the standard from the inception of his company. Walt Disney said in an interview:

I'm not the perfectionist anymore. It's my staff--they're the ones always insisting on doing something better and better. I'm the fellow trying to hurry them to finish before they spoil the job. You can overwork drawing or writing and lose the spontaneity (Smith, 2001, p.94).

Walt Disney had control of his personal image. His Sunday evening programs through years solidified his image as "America's Uncle." He was very careful with the image. A 1962 Newsweek article explored Walt Disney's identity:

In the world of children, he is the rich uncle--the casual, ordinary-looking man with the graying mustache and the baggy eyes who shows up from time to time, does funny tricks and gives wonderful presents, and then goes away until the next time. He makes everybody laugh, and everybody wonders about him--because like any proper rich uncle, he presents a fascinating mystery. Among other things, he is probably the best-known artist in the world, but he hasn't drawn a picture since 1928. He is a hugely successful businessman, but he can't be bothered with financial details and isn't even an officer in his own company. He is a Hollywood rajah who looks, talks, and lives like the owner of a Midwest hardware store (Newsweek, 2005, p.81).

Walt Disney worked hard to protect the public identity created in the 1950s and 1960s, even down to the small details. He did not want to do anything that would diminish the identity. Privately he was a lifelong smoker and succumbed to lung cancer due to the activity, but he did not want the public to know he smoked. Walt Disney, an uncle figure that appeared weekly on various programs, would not be a smoker (Gabler, 2006).

## **Community**

The ideas of community emerged from the beginning of his professional career, he wanted the best artists he could find, and he wanted his working conditions to feel like a community. He surrounded himself with people that could do what he could not (Iwerks, 2019). When the Walt Disney Studio was built and opened in Burbank, California, journalists equated it to a college campus. Nugent (1947), in a *New York Times* feature, described the atmosphere at the studio:

Most Hollywood studios look like storage warehouses: Disney's mulberry-and-green layout is more of a cross between a country club and a sanitarium. It has a baseball diamond, a batter of ping pong tables, a couple of horseshoe pitching lances and a penthouse sundeck where the male employees acquire an all-over tan. The workaday buildings are air-conditioned and reasonably dustproof. Walt's office suite has a stainless-steel kitchen, a dressing room and shower, a piano, radio-phonograph, couches, coffee tables and a desk which has acquired an inferiority complex through his consistent issues of it.

The studio had communal features that made it a home for Walt Disney and a comfort for his employees. He alluded to Kent (1938) the community is a source of power:

We're an organization of young men. We have licked every mechanical difficulty which our medium presented. We don't have to answer to anyone. We don't have to make profits for stockholders. New York investors can't tell us what kind of picture they want us to make or hold back. I get the boys together and we decide what we want to do next. Now it's my ambition to set up the organization so that it will belong to the people in it. The revenue from *Snow White* gives us a chance to go ahead (p.11).

Eventually, the Disney company would go public and limit Walt Disney's control (Greene & Greene, 2001).

He understood the importance of community within a creative business. He created a place to learn (Zwonitzer et al., 2015a). He spoke to this in an interview with Ballantine (2005):

I get together with my group--we've got some good people here--and we bat things around. Whatever we accomplish is due to the combined effort. The organization must be with you or you don't get it done; they just say to heck with him, let him do it himself. In my organization, there is respect for every individual, and we all have a keen respect for the public (p.135).

Even though Walt Disney is credited with the creation of the modern theme park and the new technology used to create it, like Audio-Animatronic Figures, he could not do it alone. He recognized the importance of people at work.

Though stern, employees respected him. Eddy (1955) addressed employees' relationship with him in a magazine feature:

His associates know that no matter what the provocation, Disney almost never explodes against an underling or fires a man who is honestly trying to deliver a job. Few workers who become established at the Disney studio ever leave, voluntarily or otherwise, and many have been on the payroll all their working lives (p.112).

Walt Disney believed in learning communities' power, and he felt there was no substitution for the community. In an article about the use of film in education, He said, "There can be no presumption that a film can replace the textbook, the laboratory or even the lecture (Disney, 1945, p. 122)." This belief was evident in the in-studio art classes he offered in the 1930s to aid animators in honing their animation skills (Gabler, 2006; Thomas, 1994)

The idea of a learning community extended to creating the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). CalArts was a merger of the Chouinard Institute and the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music. This project joined artists with learners. He envisioned a place where all disciplines worked together to inspire one another. He envisioned a community where the painter would inspire the actor, and the actor would inspire the musician (CalArts, 2011). Walt Disney looked at his involvement with CalArts as his legacy. He said, "CalArts is the principal thing I hope to leave when I move on to greener pastures. If I can help provide a place to develop the talent of the future, I think I will have accomplished something" (CalArts, 2021).

Walt Disney also encouraged and invested in young artists. As part of Disney merchandising, the company made art kits. Children would often send him drawings for critique. He would respond. In a response to drawing he received he encouraged the young artist to keep working and honing his craft. Walt Disney said:



I think you have made an excellent start and your work shows promise. Follow the instructions in the Kit and try to draw the characters free-hand. It's lots of fun trying and with practice you'll be surprised how your work improves and how closely your sketches will resemble the real characters (W.Disney, personal communication, October 12, 1956).

At this time in Walt Disney's career, the studio and Disneyland were thriving. He was extremely busy with various projects, but he took the time to make sure a young fan received a response.

Dale Varner created models of Disneyland as a child. He suffered a severe case of rheumatic fever which forced him to stay indoors. Not interested in model cars, he began making miniatures of Disneyland. He sent some slides and wrote a letter to Walt Disney telling him of his work. He asked if he could get pictures of Disneyland to make more models, and Walt Disney returned his slides, complimented his work, and forwarded his request to the public relations department (W.Disney, personal communication, July 23, 1964). Walt Disney's work and concern for the community on all levels lead to the recurring theme of legacy.

## **Legacy**

In Walt Disney's pursuit for community, there was overlap with the idea of legacy as he tried to create a place where his influence would continue. The idea of legacy is a characteristic in the hero's return as the community should sustain into the future without the hero's physical presence (Campbell, 2008). Creating a standard for the operation was evident within his vision and work.

He told *Think* magazine, "I'm always close to the project when we're chewing over the basic idea...Once the pattern is set...I let the staff take over and I go on to other things" (Edison, 1959, p.27). This attitude was evident throughout his career, from early animation to less

involvement later in his career. Walt Disney was the sole lead in the creation of Disneyland, and once it was a thriving venture, he moved his involvement to create an East Coast Disneyland and the California Institute for the Arts. Time was Walt Disney's greatest enemy.

He understood the importance of community as it relates to legacy. When Walt Disney addressed his employees in 1941, he stressed the importance of community in the perpetuation of legacy:

It is my belief that if this is to be a strong, self-sufficient organization, it cannot be run by one-man. I do not want this organization set up so that it would not function without me, merely to please my ego. The organization must perpetuate itself; it must be able to carry on if anything should ever happen to me. The future of all the men who have given their time and effort to this business cannot be jeopardized by any selfish attitude on my part, or any desire to be the big shot. We have constantly been searching for leaders; we have made many mistakes, and have tried to rectify those mistakes. While training artists and technicians, we have at the same time been trying to train executives. We have been trying to find men who could be recognized as leaders not by the wearing of a badge, but by the respect of their fellow-workers. We need those meant to carry this business on. A policy and a plan like this assures a strong solid organization that can rise to any emergency, and above all, and perhaps the most important thing, is that it means security to every man here (Disney, 2005, p.19).

In the speech, he emphasized that training and education perpetuate the legacy of Walt Disney's creation.

Walt Disney desired to build a legacy and a body of work that far outlasted him. He included a letter in the 1965 stakeholders report. In the letter, he speaks to the idea of legacy being a part of the Disney company. He said:

Around, here, however, we don't look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things, because we're curious...and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths. We're always exploring and experimenting. Right now, we are busy dreaming up ideas for our future motion picture productions, new stories for elevation, new adventures for Disneyland, and our biggest new adventure of all, "Disney World" in Florida.

Walt Disney worked close enough with his projects to get them to the point they can survive without him because he has instilled his vision. He told the Saturday Evening Post in an interview regarding Disneyland that "I've started it...not only to keep it going...but keep it building to a point that it can never be topped (Fowler, 2005, p.112).

### **Solidifying Walt Disney's Professional Identity**

Walt Disney's professional identity was a solidification of personal and professional experiences and an obsession with control, community, and legacy. Marty Sklar, one of the early Imagineers, said that he had one foot in the past and one foot in the future. He even said, "I love the nostalgic myself. I hope we never lose some of the things from the past" (Smith, 2001, p.253). Walt Disney had a sense of where he came from, but he had a vision of where he was going. This mindset is evidence of the influence of the separation and the task of the return. He was rooted in the place from which he came. Through experiences, he committed to where he was heading in the future.

Walt Disney attributed failure as one of the greatest setups for his success, and his learning occurred through the trials within the initiation stage. He said, "All the adversity I've had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles, have strengthened me" (Smith, 2001, p.104).

Failure was a teacher:

I think it's important to have a good hard failure when you're young. I learned a lot out of that. Because it makes you kind of aware of what can happen to you. Because of it I've never had any fear in my whole life when we've been near collapse and all of that. I've never been afraid. I've never had the feeling I couldn't walk out and get a job doing something" (Smith, 2001, p.105).

He attributed failure as a sense of preparation:

It's good to have a failure while you're young because it teaches you so much. For one thing it makes you aware that such a thing can happen to anybody, and once you've lived through the worst, you're never quite as vulnerable afterward (Smith, 2001, p.105).

Walt Disney summed up his professional success with four Cs: curiosity, confidence, courage, and constancy. He thought that the most important was business confidence, despite lacking it personally (Eddy, 1955; Iwerks, 2019). Walt Disney told Newsweek in 1962, "I'm not modest. I'm scared. I'm not funny. I hide behind the mouse, the duck, and a lot of other things...All I try to do and hope for is to do as well in the future as I've done in the past" (Newsweek, 2005, p.87).

No singular event created the person Walt Disney became. Eddy (1955) discussed his professional identity in a magazine interview in which he said:

The common misconception about Disney, I believe, is that he is a sentimental softy. He isn't. He is sentimental, true enough, and to strangers he often seems soft, benign, bashful, or bewildered. Perhaps for flashing moments he is, but he never loses command of any situation. He knows what he's doing every instant. And behind the shy facade is a tough realist who can and does fight like a wildcat when the occasion demands it. And a will as inflexible as oak. When he planned to produce *Snow White* as the first full-length cartoon feature in movie history, his rivals and his ankers promptly named the project "Disney's Folly." But he went ahead and made it, anyway. One of his long-time associates, fishing for a phrase to describe him, told me he was "steel springs inside a silk pillow," and that sums it up very neatly (p.111).

Walt Disney was a creator. He used his life experience to bring life through animation, and he created experiences from manifestations of the imagination. The pleasure was the reward for the world from his journey. Walt Disney communicated the effects of his journey as one that brings pleasure.

The inclination of my life--the motto, you might call it--has been to do things and make things which will give pleasure to people in new and amusing ways. By doing that I please and satisfy myself. It is my wish to delight all members of the family, young and old, parent and child, in the kind of entertainment my associates and I turn out of our studio in Burbank, California. I think all artists--whether they paint, write, sing or play music, write for the theater or movies, make poetry or sculpture--all of these are first of all pleasure-givers. People who like to bring delight to other people, and hereby gain pleasure and satisfaction for themselves (Smith, 2001, p. 259).

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter looked at the life of Walt Disney using the lens of the Hero's Journey. Narrative life experiences can be viewed and organized within the parts of the Heroic Journey model. However, there is no clear distinction on the degree to which lived experience has the most significant impact on one's identity. However, all experiences work together to contribute to the creation of personal and professional identity. Chapter five will offer conclusions on the findings.

## Chapter 5. Conclusions

The purpose of this multimethod single-case study was to examine the application of Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model as a means of professional identity creation in the life of Walt Disney. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings related to the literature on narrative and myth, self-discovery and self-creation, identity, change, and professional identity. A discussion on the personal use of the Heroic Journey model has included a discussion of study limitations, areas of future research, and a summary.

The chapter contains discussion and future possibilities to help answer the research questions:

RQ1: How did each part (separation, initiation, and return) of the monomyth in the Heroic Journey model help create Walt Disney's professional identity?

RQ2: How does Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model apply to the development of professional identity in the life of Walt Disney?

Campbell's Heroic Journey model was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Rooted in folkloristics, the Heroic Journey model used narrative experiences as a means of personal self-discovery and self-construction (Murray, 2009). In the model, Campbell (2008) suggested that the world's myths were not a series of differing myths but one myth, the monomyth, played out differently across cultures.

This study applied the monomyth to the life of Walt Disney. The monomyth is broken into three parts (separation, initiation, and return), with 17 stages dispersed across the parts. The Heroic Journey model states that all heroes leave their familiar world, progress through trials, and return home with new learning for change. This framework was applied to Walt Disney's life

to look at the narrative influence on professional identity. The coded data were evaluated using a simplified version of the Heroic Journey model used in a university-level self-discovery course (Murray, 2009).

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The Heroic Journey model was designed to explore global cultural myths. Through Campbell's (2008) work, he discovered that the world contained one myth, monomyth, versus varying myths. The world had more in common with stories than differences. This study used Campbell's ideas to explore the life of Walt Disney. This study considered all personal stories and experiences as a form of narrative.

**RQ1: How did each part (separation, initiation, and return) of the monomyth help create Walt Disney's professional identity?**

### **Heroic Journey Model: Separation, Initiation, and Return**

All three parts of the Hero's Journey are necessary to create identity both personally and professionally. The happenings within the separation prepare the hero to leave the known world, collect skills, and meet mentors for the journey to lay the necessary foundation. The initiation forces the hero to self-examine, and that self-examination equips the hero with strength. That strength is related to their pre-journey preparation. Once the hero learns the necessary lessons, they make the return home to create a new reality with new knowledge. This order must be present to use narrative as a tool for discovery, creation, sensemaking, and identity creation (Campbell, 2008; Konner & Perlmutter, 1988; Murray, 2009).

The parts and stages outlined in the Heroic Journey model are organizational elements. They help label and categorize experiences and put them in the context of a story. These parts (separation, initiation, and return) provide order to the chaos of life so it can be processed and



understood for change (Gottschall, 2013). Looking at the hero's journey as an organizational pattern makes the myth practical for daily application.

Myth and narratives in cultures take on larger-than-life personas. The stories are of characters that appear to be superhuman in some contexts. This idea speaks to the divided nature of narrative and stories (Bamburg, 2004, 2008; Freeman, 2006; Roberts, 2004). Looking at narrative as belonging to a larger culture and small stories belonging to an individual makes narrative inapplicable to daily living, and small stories seem insignificant to larger narratives. Understanding the Heroic Journey model as an organizational pattern demystifies larger narratives and puts small stories on a more even playing field for significance. One must recognize that narratives and stories play an active role in daily living.

### **Self-Discovery and Self-Creation**

Through reflection and sensemaking, it is critical to view all communication as a form of narrative in the Hero's Journey. Narrative experiences empower one to discover and create identity (Fisher, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1989; Jones, 2014). Cultural narratives teach the listeners some lessons through reflection (Campbell, 2008; Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). As listeners interact with narrative, they should make discoveries about themselves and the world or create a new reality based on the told narrative. Self-discovery and self-creation depend heavily on interactive reflection and sensemaking.

The level of self-discovery and self-creation through narrative experiences is known only by the person with the experience and doing the reflection. That individual is the only one who knows the impact a story or event has on their lives, and that individual is the only one to know the level of reflection done to achieve that understanding. Historical research can only make a

subjective inference regarding a narrative's level of influence on self-discovery or self-creation on an individual.

With Walt Disney, there were plausible relationships between occurrences in his life based on accounts from primary and secondary data. It appeared that the reflective process was present to induce change by the decisions he made. What is not known is the level of formality in his reflective and sensemaking processes. It posed the question; how intentional were Walt Disney's reflective habits? For Walt Disney, losing Oswald the Lucky Rabbit's rights, Ub Iwerks leaving, and the animators' strike were significant points in his personal life and career. These seemed to have a profound impact on his decisions, creativity, and leadership.

He felt betrayed, and he lost trust in people. Initially, he saw his employees as a family, and he thought of himself as one of the guys (Disney, 2005; Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001; Schickel, 1997). When he recognized the feeling was not mutual, he began to isolate himself. The only people close enough to be considered friends in his life were his family and old acquaintances. He insulated himself from the employees at the studio and was not as accessible in the latter days.

Professionally, the loss of trust and control impacted the approach he took when leading projects post-1941. It supports Pestana's and Condina's (2020) idea that a leader's identity changes due to lived experiences affecting leadership decisions. The identity change has more impact than the actual events. Identifying change in light of events was a recurring pattern in the data.

Walt Disney's leadership style was very authoritarian at times, but he depended heavily on others he knew would make his vision a reality. He did not care about employee satisfaction

(Arendt et al., 2019). He had to have control for the sake of the vision. Leadership guided by faithfulness to vision is indicative of the communication approach to leadership (Eisenberg et al., 2016; Hackman & Johnson, 2018; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Lawrence, 2015.)

His vision propelled the studio's creative processes, but it was Walt Disney's identity and how he communicated his vision that resulted in the commitment from faithful employees (Men, 2014). This spirit of discovery, creation, and control is still evident in the oligarchical nature of the present company. Today, the Walt Disney Company successfully operates amusement, film, television, and music divisions and the acquisition of other entertainment franchises.

### **The Hero's Journey and Identity**

All humans have multiple identities through interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions. This interaction means humans actively participate in multiple Hero's Journeys at one time based on the relationship with change, time, or place. (Campbell, 2008; Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). Identity is the communication of self to the world (Eisenberg et al., 2016). It is vital to recognize the world consists of many opportunities for interaction with varying demands from participants. Those demands come with requirements and expectations that place individuals in a particular role, so each environment is a separate Hero's Journey for that individual (Gould, 2010; Maddalena, 2013).

Depth is a defining characteristic of the Hero's Journey when examining its role in identity. Humans are fulfilling many roles at once depending on interaction and environment. When examining the Hero's Journey in classical myths or even Disney films, they are somewhat one dimensional. If the characters were real, the audience sees one piece of their story. In most

cases, it is the most defining moment of their tale. The audience is not privy to the character's full backstory or their life after the tale.

When looking at one's life story as a Hero's Journey, one must account for every narrative experience because all narrative experiences provide direction for the human experience (Roberts, 2004). With that idea, all of his experiences had an opportunity to shape the person he would become as a leader and professional. Those same experiences could contribute to his identity in general.

Life is a multidimensional narrative experience because all humans fulfill different roles in different environments that possess unique challenges. Each role is a separate Hero's Journey (Campbell, 2008). As a son, father, brother, husband, friend, creator, thinker, and innovator, Walt Disney would have respective identities and unique Hero's Journeys for each role. In each role, he encountered all three parts of the Hero's Journey, and in some cases, he could simultaneously experience the three parts and stages of the Hero's Journey, whether conscious or subconscious.

This same idea is valid for all humans. When individuals make sense of self through the interaction with the environment and narrative experiences, they create identity (Weick 1995, 2001; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Each role a person fulfills has its respective identity and individual Hero's Journey. The only difference between Walt Disney and living persons is living persons are actively involved in their stories. They are living narratives and cannot know the depth of the experience until the reflection process happens, which turns into a process of self-discovery and self-creation (Adi et al., 2015; Holder & McKinney, 1992; Holmes, 2007; Murray, 2009).

Walt Disney's childhood is an example of this idea of identity created in context with community. His childhood was stern. His father had high demands on the family when it came to work and conduct. Elias Disney was a religious fanatic, and his fanaticism impacted the way he raised and interacted with his children. This rearing was tough on him because he knew that his father's environment was not the environment he wanted. The demands of childhood allowed him to create his own world and govern it the way he felt best. To Elias Disney's credit, he did pay for Walt Disney to take art courses as a teenager, but the demand for work still existed. Finding a balance between work and play forced Walt Disney to cherish his free time and hobbies because he understood the sacredness of time. (Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001).

In creative work, Walt Disney mirrored some of Elias Disney's authoritarian behaviors. As a father, he treated his children as individuals. He would listen to his daughters and adapt to be a part of their lives. In an article discussing the challenges of being a girl dad, he talked about driving the girls to school. On the drive, he would listen to the conversation to know who they were and their interests (Disney, 1948). This identity Walt Disney established as a father to his daughters could have been a direct result of the relationship he had with his father, Elias Disney, in childhood. Humans' ability to encapsulate multiple identities allows them to be different things to different people based on the environment.

### **Professional Identity**

Professional identity is an extension of personal identity as the personal identity adds definition to the professional self and vice versa (Adams & Crafford, 2012; Hersted & Frimann, 2016; Said, 2014; Smith et al., 2015). The two identities cannot be separate from one another, but when the two identities align, it communicates one's authentic self (Eisenberg et al., 2016;

Sutherland et al., 2010). Professional identity is not the soul of a person's identity. However, it is a defining characteristic of who they are and an amalgamation of their past and present.

His role defined his professional identity as a creator. He brought things to life, from animation to Audio-Animatronics. Through his creations, he created industry standards. In animation, synchronized sound and movement became the standard in cartoon shorts. Viewing animation as art, he elevated the production quality and legitimized the field beyond the Disney Studio. In amusement, he created the modern theme park design and turned imagination into reality (Watt, 1997).

Walt Disney demanded perfection. Based on the evidence, perfectionism could consciously or subconsciously stem from his paternal relationship with his father. Elias Disney had stringent demands. Ultimately, it was for the greater good of his family. Walt Disney's perfectionism was for the greater good of the company and the product.

Within the Hero's Journey, Campbell (2008) discussed that the hero must face their father for reconciliation or overcome them. Personally, and as a father, Walt Disney overcame Elias Disney's influence, but professionally, he mirrored Elias. In essence, he was the studio's father, and he had high demands for his children, the employees. His vision was the goal for all of them.

Creating the best product was the purpose of the work. There were times that fast money would be a more manageable goal than the meticulousness of the art. Walt knew the product would outlast him, and Walt's professional identity was his controlling nature. That nature built the foundation of the company. His example and demands propelled its legacy (Disney, 2005; Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001; Schickel, 1997).

Disneyland University is an example of his perfectionistic ideal and customer service legacy. In the creation of Disneyland, he knew what Disneyland employees should look like, and he knew how they should act. Disneyland University was a way to train employees to work and function within the perfection of Disneyland. This idea continues to be used across all Disney Parks today. Cast members are trained with the Disney way of operation.

Walt Disney had a series of failures added to the perfectionistic desire. Despite setbacks, he found a way to move forward and progress. He did not let the nature of his failure determine the future of his success. Learning resilience helped him establish that sense of control in the idea that if he did all he could do, then the failure he experienced was out of his control. Failure forced him down a path of self-discovery and self-creation (Gillard et al., 2019).

Professionally, Walt Disney did what he felt he needed to do to create the person his company needed. That person did not live up to the mythologized vision that he created and wanted to project. Unsavory aspects of his professional identity were necessary to achieve the vision and goal he had for his company. In all, it was interaction with his family, community, and company culture that formed Walt Disney's professional identity (Buckingham, 2008; Howard, 2000; Maalouf, 2012; Proctor; 1996).

The lesson to be learned from Walt Disney's professional identity is that it is necessary to embrace the vision. Professional identity must be progressive by not settling for the status quo. Every person brings personal experiences that can be foundational experiences for learning. Those experiences must be used to solidify the professional self. Solidification only happens through recognition, reflection, and sensemaking in the face of a changing world.

## **Change**

The Hero's Journey looked at change as a continual state of being (Campbell, 2008; Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). Walt Disney embraced change. Walt Disney saw the power of the change process, and his life and career were the act of balancing and inducing degrees of change at various times. Walt Disney was not comfortable with the status quo, and when life began to rebound from the trials of the 1940s, he did not relish the success of the new animated films and enjoy his time. He had to create, and the act of creation is a part of the change process. He willingly moved into the unknown with the creation of Disneyland and other Disney ventures.

Embracing identity through the Hero's Journey is embracing change because identity is forging through change (Holder & McKinney, 1992; Williams, 2019). The Hero's Journey is a way to categorize events within one's journey, and through the organization, one can see events that contributed to change (Dicks & Kennedy, 2018; Strom, 2009; Yogerst, 2014). Change can be physical, or it can be psychological, but change must have a sense of meaning as it contributes to self-discovery and self-creation (Alase, 2017; Andrade, 2011; Daniels, 2008; Fullan, 2006; Weick, 1995; Williams, 2019).

Walt Disney's vision induced and embraced the change that altered the entertainment industry. Within the animation community, he legitimized it as an art that elevated the production quality. He invested in the created product and not in the financial success. These actions are reminiscent of the transactional leadership style, where the leader acts as a change agent (Eisenberg, Goodall, and Tretheway, 2014). The introduced change must be accepted and enacted through the community because successful change is a committed community effort (Andrade, 2011; Campbell, 2008; Fullan, 1996; Fullan, 2001; Ginsberg & Bernstein, 2011).



Change in the creation of identity must be viewed as a critical step in the process of becoming. Change is constant, and the relationship one has with self, environment, and work is in constant flux. Walt Disney experienced and learned to embrace this idea. Several times in his career as the studio grew, his role changed, as the studio went public for financial reasons, his role changed, as the Disney Company came into its own in the 1950s, his role changed. He learned to adapt, which kept progress moving. Recognizing and embracing narrative is the only way to categorize and understand the change process in personal and professional identity concerning Hero's Journey (Brown et al., 2009; Kraus, 2006; Lum, 2008; Meyer, 2014; Young, 2012).

### **Recognizing Narrative**

There was a point in his career that he did not know his place. He stopped drawing because he lacked prowess, did not perform or act in any film, and did not write the produced stories. It came to a point where he was at a loss, but through business challenges, he recognized his role as storyman and encompassed it over time.

Life cannot be separated from the narrative process as it is narrative that defines aspects of life (Fisher 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1989; Gottschall, 2013; Jones, 2014). The key is to recognize the narrative's existence and its role in an individual's life and community (Blé, 2017; Hackman & Johnson, 2018; Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Individuals often do not recognize their life as a myth or master narrative. Walt Disney recognized this because he understood the power of story.

Campbell (2008) argued that all myths across cultures and time were the same except played out with different characters. Myths become a template for living (Hutchinson, 2000). A

myth that characterizes the American spirit and becomes the myth for the American dream is the rags-to-riches story. It is a *Cinderella*-like tale where the main character comes from lowly beginnings with odds stacked against them. Through hard work and determination, they rise above their station in life either by will or divine intervention. The character becomes the embodiment of success because of their will, work, and persistence. That character is the archetype for success and living. Historical figures and their stories embody this idea of the American rags-to-riches tale; reality, it is more of an idea than a reality.

Walt Disney's life was categorized as the rags-to-riches American story, and he recognized his personal story's power. He spoke of his humble beginnings and his poverty. He talked about his work ethic when life was against him. He would remember details of significant events differently for dramatics because some stories are just better than others. This was evident when he recounted Mickey's creation.

A tale about a downtrodden, disappointed Walt Disney doodling in a sketchbook on a cross country train ride to discover Mickey by chance is a better story than Mickey being the product of a brainstorming session at the studio. In some stories he told, Mickey's inspiration was the pet mouse he had at the Kansas City studio when his career was still a dream. Again, that is a better story than a brainstorming session at the studio. Walt Disney only knows the point in time of Mickey's inception, but He recognized the creation myth's power.

Stories must be recognized to be embraced. It is through the recognition of narrative that affords individuals opportunities to use stories. It is the recognition that leads individuals on paths of self-discovery and self-creation.

## **Reflection and Sensemaking**

Recognizing one's story is the first step to reflection, self-discovery, self-creation, and sensemaking. The act of reflection allows individuals to discover the decisive moments in their lives by providing organization to experiences for sensemaking (Gottschall, 2013; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005).). As one is living life, they may not recognize certain events' power without intentional reflection and sensemaking because intentional reflection makes the unknown known (Peterson, 1999).

Throughout his life, there was evidence of the reflective process on the professional level. The creation of Disneyland is a prime example. Walt Disney reflected on and spoke of the times he had with his daughters on the weekends in many interviews. He saw the enjoyment they had on their adventures. He wished he could have shared moments with them more actively than participatory on the side.

He used nostalgic moments from his past to employ in the design of Disneyland. Marceline gave him a sense of magic and wonder, which he attributed to a physical place and time in his life. He worked to recreate that magic and feeling for others at Disneyland through Main Street, USA, a paragon of a turn-of-the-century town.

Those events were the seeds for Disneyland. He created a place that he would have enjoyed visiting with his family. Without his reflection on influential moments, the idea for Disneyland might not have emerged. The story embedded within Disneyland is the heartbeat of the experience just as the narrative is the heartbeat of motivation through reflection.

**RQ2: How does Joseph Campbell's Heroic Journey model apply to the development of professional identity in the life of Walt Disney?**

Walt Disney's legacy is a testament to the effectiveness of the Hero's Journey. In American culture, Walt Disney had the hero persona. The public can mythologize people in power, but some of his mythic reputation was his creation. It is undeniable that Walt Disney changed the entertainment industry's face by making certain innovations industry norms and fostering communities committed to learning and the proliferation of the arts.

Walt Disney did not achieve his professional successes alone. His vision was the catalyst to move beyond his known world, but the community's help made his imagined world a reality. Two hallmarks of the separation stage are leaving the known world and finding mentors. Leaving requires movement either by the hero's will or external necessity. As the hero moves, they find individuals along the journey with wisdom to help prepare them for what is to come (Campbell, 2008; Davis & Weeden, 2009; Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). On his journey, he saw his weaknesses and potential present in others. For his vision's sake, he worked and listened to create a community that would help make his imagination a reality for the world. He understood that his ideas could not come to life without the community's help (Alase, 2017; Andrade, 2011; Fullan, 2006).

The hero faced the trials during the first part's progression, separation, to initiation in the second part of the journey. This transition from the known world to the unknown world is where the hero is tested. This time, the hero makes discoveries, and this learning becomes the foundation for the return if the hero decides to return. No matter the trials faced, the hero is

equipped (Davis & Weeden, 2009; Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). They may not know that at the time, but they will discover the inner strength to persevere.

The significant trials in Walt Disney's journey were either self-induced, financial, or critical. There were times he committed too tightly to his vision that he failed to resonate with the community. There were times he did not listen, and it caused unfair criticism. Walt Disney's imagination was costly, and it put the company under financial strains. There was turmoil within the world that worked against his vision. Despite the scenario, he continued and persevered. The vision was constant despite the trials in the path.

Walt Disney's experiences equipped him for the return. The foundation laid in the separation of the known world to the trials faced in the unknown world's initiation equipped him with the needed vision for the future. The hero's return is classified as the time the hero returns to the known world with new learning for the community. This new learning will provide a new normal for the community members (Campbell, 2008; Davis & Weeden, 2009; Williams, 2019).

One of the hero's return hallmarks was the idea that the change that occurred as a result of the Hero's Journey would long outlast the hero. The hero embeds the enlightenment of change so profoundly in the community that thinking becomes a norm. Community commitment is a requirement for accepting long-term change (Fullan, 1996, 2001, 2006).

The idea of the community's role in change harkens to the distinction between narratives and stories. To some scholars, narratives belong more to a culture and community than individuals (Bamberg, 2004; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Freeman, 2006; Roberts, 2004). The legend of Walt Disney is the cultural narrative that drives the Walt Disney Company today. Walt Disney's professional identity was the result of the hero's return and the

establishment of his legacy. Walt Disney's personal and professional experiences allowed him to realize the importance of legacy and value of place.

A part of his legacy was the establishment of the Disney way of operation. Disney, over the years, has been synonymous with top-quality entertainment and products. That relationship cannot be separated from his demand for perfection and the idea of continual betterment. Walt Disney worked in color when the world was operating in black and white (Gabler, 2006; Greene & Greene, 2001; Schickel, 1997; Watts, 1997). Over the years, leaders within the company enhanced and built upon his ideas. However, his unwavering dedication to his vision built the foundation that guides the studio today.

Walt Disney had a dedication to place, and his creative work was not solely for him but the public. He strived to create a place people could visit that embodied his vision and culmination of his imagination. He said the animation was always a means to an end for him, and it was the animation that opened the door to all the Disney adventures.

Walt Disney created places and communities where people could come together for a purpose. The places created by Walt Disney were often places of celebration. Disneyland was a place to celebrate imagination in the experiences of yesterday through the hope of tomorrow (Bright, 1987). Even though he and his team manufactured and controlled almost every aspect of the guests' experiences, it was a place where people could join in and be a part of something distant from the everyday world.

Disneyland was a shrine of imagination; it was a playground where Walt Disney invited the world to play. It was the place where all the characters and stories that Disney told came to live and thrive in the context of the real world. Disneyland was the living manifestation of Walt

Disney's dream. The fact that Disneyland and now Disney Parks worldwide are still relevant more than a half-century later is a testament to Walt Disney's legacy.

Walt Disney was an artist and creator at heart. Even though he did not actively produce the studio projects, it was his ideas and imagination that drove them. He was the common denominator in the Walt Disney Company. Toward the end of his life and career, Roy worked a deal to sell WED Enterprises back to the studio to have all the Disney assets located in one place. This move was a breaking point for the brothers because Roy Disney saw it as a wise move financially, and Walt Disney saw it as the loss of his creative community. The Disney brothers did not speak for some time, but Roy Disney realized that no one would be there fighting for the studio's ideas and products if it were not for Walt Disney's imagination (Gabler, 2006).

The California Institute of the Arts was Walt Disney's legacy project because it encompassed the community that he desired to create throughout his career. It was the physical place where artists could come and create and find inspiration in each other. It was a community to explore the practical side of art. Together the synergy would take the act of creating to a level beyond an artist studio or salon, but it would become a tangible piece of the world. CalArts was a physical place that artists could go to and be free to express ideas. This place contributed to the counterculture movement of the late 1960s and 1970s (Brode, 2004).

Walt Disney enjoyed and fought for his creative freedom throughout his career. He created spaces for people to exercise their creative and imaginative freedoms beyond the current situation's reality during his return. In his way, his legacy was that of an artist, creator, and teacher. He used curiosity as a medium to create, and he used his imagination to teach the world to grow beyond the realm of reality. In all that he did, he wanted to be surrounded by artists,

creatives, innovators, and thinkers, and Walt Disney was his happiest when he was at the helm of innovation, art, and ideas.

## **Limitations**

The researcher agrees that a multimethod case study was the right choice for this study. However, document review, historical research, and observational data were not designed to capture conclusive empirical results. Therefore, subjectivity and bias were two of the most significant limitations of the study. Inferences were the critical tools of analysis while exploring the data. Examining major events in Walt Disney's life and comparing and contrasting those events using primary and secondary documents, one could only assume the specific essential events that influenced him in his life through the emerging patterns. Only Walt Disney could attest to the moments that truly defined who he was as a person and who he was as a professional.

Researcher bias was another limitation of the study through data analysis. Oversaturation with the subject on behalf of the researcher could have provided a situation where all events were not explored or analyzed equally or thoroughly for contributions to professional identity.

More credibility could be given to this study with the inclusion of more primary documents. The Walt Disney Company controls the resources and release of information from the Walt Disney archive. In contrast, in most archives, archivists release documents and information for the sake of research. The company maintains the authority over what and how much information was released. To have full access to all of Walt Disney's documents could alter the outcome of the study.



## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Many theories exist on how identity is created. Some scholars suggested that identity creation defines self- concerning external and internal factors (Gould, 2010; Maddalena, 2013). Interpretation of stories has been a determining factor in creating identity through self-discovery, self-creation, and reflection (Fleischer, 2005; Gillard & Hartman, 2019, Gregg, 2011; Monceri, 2009). Jones (2014) asserted that understanding others is an act of understanding their stories. If this is true for others, then it must be valid for an individual, as in most studies, stories and narratives are a means to communicate identity (Bamberg, 2006, Howard, 2000, Schman, 1984, Wessels, 2015).

Narrative is the repeating connective factor in all means of identity creation. Narrative closes the gap on missing information (Peterson, 1999). More research is needed focusing solely on the narrative's role and influencing power in the identity creation process beyond the act of communication. Additionally, further research is needed to explore the relationship between self-discovery, self-creation, reflection, sensemaking, and narrative. Discovering, creating, and reflecting on self is dependent heavily on narrative. More research is needed to understand the level of narrative dependence in those areas. Besides, further research is needed to explore the Heroic Journey model's uses beyond its uses in folkloristics. If the model is used as a means of self-discovery and self-creation, it must have a more significant influence on identity creation as a whole (Murray, 2009).

A more precise definition of professional identity and its creation is needed. Some studies refer to professional identity as work identity (Adams & Crafford, 2012; Smith et al., 2015; Sutherland et al., 2010). Some scholars allude to professional identity as leadership identity (Hersted & Frimann, 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Said, 2014). Other studies identified

professional identity specifically by profession (Priest & Seemiller, 2018). Creating a consensus of what professional identity is would further the scholarship on the topic.

Based on existing research of professional identity creation and the Heroic Journey model, a study using living participants versus historical participants could yield more in depth-first personal findings. However, there are opportunities for more historical research using the model by looking at other notable leaders, giving the fact there is comprehensive primary and secondary source data. Discovering ways to explore identity creation qualitatively through a mixed-methods study would enhance the scholarship as well.

### **Chapter Summary**

Walt Disney was a dreamer, innovator, and creator in the last half of the 20th century, and he created and redefined the film and amusement park industries. He was a boy from the Midwest who matured into one of Hollywood's most powerful studio heads. Through dedication to a personal vision, Walt Disney has touched generations of people for almost a century. Walt Disney's life and professional identity's success and failures are directly tied to his personal Hero's Journey.

The Heroic Journey model is a lens to create and discover one's identity by using stories as a vehicle of understanding. Narrative cannot be separated from the human experience as it is one's life that creates the story of their existence through separation, initiation, and return. Every experience from one's birth to death contributes to whom they will become both personally and professionally. By looking at life as a series of stories and narratives, one realizes the depth of their identity through reflection and examination.

Walt Disney as an American hero is an image that was birthed through the power of the Hero's Journey. He left the known within the Midwestern United States to venture into the uncharted and unknown universe of creation, art, and animation in Hollywood. Through the challenges he faced on the journey, He prepared to face the future by providing the world with innovations, thoughts, and practices that would be accepted industry norms.

Not all people live lives as fanciful and public as Walt Disney's. They may not change the face of industry or manufacture an immortal living universe like Disneyland, but they are all heroes on their respective journeys. All people, regardless of their station in life, are surrounded by narrative experiences unique to them. Each person is responsible for examining their journeys through narrative to discover and create their identity personally and professionally.

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APPENDIX: Walt Disney Timeline

Walt Disney's Heroic Journey			
Date	Walt Disney's Personal History	Walt Disney's Professional History	Hero's Journey
1888-1900	<p>1888-Flora Call and Elias Disney married January 1.</p> <p>First child, Herbert Arthur Disney, born December 8.</p> <p>1889-Family moves from Florida to Chicago.</p> <p>1890-Raymond Arnold Disney born December 30.</p> <p>1893-Roy Oliver Disney June 24.</p>		<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>

<p>1901-1906</p>	<p>1901-Walter Elias Disney was born December 5 in Chicago.</p> <p>1903-Ruth Flora Disney born December 6.</p> <p><u>S&amp;I-1906-Family buys a 45-acre farm and moves from Chicago to Marceline Missouri.</u></p> <p><u>S-Uncle Mike Martin fuels Walt's train obsession.</u></p>	<p><u>S-Walt Disney gets first payment for a drawing</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
<p>1907-1911</p>	<p>1908-Herbert and Raymond Disney left the farm.</p> <p>Roy Disney attends high school.</p>		<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than</p>

	<p>1909-Walt and Ruth Disney begin first grade at Park School</p> <p>Elias Disney falls ill with typhoid.</p> <p>1910- Disneys sell farm.</p> <p>1911-The family moved to Kansas City in Summer.</p> <p>Walt Disney experiences firsts of childhood.</p> <p>Walt and Ruth Disney enrolled at Benton school, repeating second grade.</p>		<p>one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
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<p>1912-1916</p>	<p>Walt Disney and Walt Pfeiffer become best friends.</p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney is indifferent student but impresses teachers with talents in acting and art; attends Saturday art classes.</u></p>	<p><u>S-Walt Disney delivers newspapers; trades drawings at local barbershop for haircuts; does amateur vaudeville routines with Pfeiffer.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
<p>1917</p>	<p>Walt and Ruth Disney graduate the seventh grade.</p> <p>Walt Disney reads a patriotic speech at graduation.</p> <p>Elias Disney invests in the O-Zell Company.</p>	<p><u>S-Walt Disney works as a news butcher on the Missouri Pacific Line in the summer.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p>



	<p>He, Flora, and Ruth move to Chicago.</p> <p>Walt Disney joins the family in September, starting as a freshman at McKinley High School.</p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney draws for the school newspaper, <i>The Voice</i>, and attends art classes at night.</u></p>		<p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
<p>1918</p>	<p>During the summer, Walt Disney dates girlfriend, Beatrice.</p> <p>Loses interest in school.</p>	<p>Walt Disney takes a summer job at the post office.</p> <p><u>S&amp;I-Bomb kills four at the post office during Walt's shift.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p>

	<p><u>S&amp;I-Tries to enlist in the military, but he is too young.</u></p> <p>In fall, after joining the Ambulance Corps, Walt Disney gets the flu and he is sent home from the local Red Cross camp.</p>	<p><u>S-Walt Disney joins the Red Cross Ambulance Corps.</u></p>	<p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
<p>November 1918- October 1919</p>	<p>Walt Disney recovers.</p> <p>War ends with continuing cleanup operations.</p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney is sent to France.</u></p> <p><u>I-Exchange letters with Beatrice to find that she has married after he returns home.</u></p>	<p>Works as a Red Cross Ambulance driver in France.</p> <p><u>I-Sends cartoons to magazines, but all are rejected.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>

<p>1919-1921</p>	<p>October 1919-Walt moved in with Herbert Disney, his family, and Roy Disney in the family home in Kansas City.</p> <p>O-Zell Company fails, and Elias and Flora Disney move back to Kansas City.</p> <p>1920-Herbert Disney and his family move to Portland, Oregon.</p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney borrows a camera and experiments in the “car barn.”</u></p> <p><u>I-Roy Disney contracts tuberculosis and is sent</u></p>	<p><u>S-1919- Walt Disney hired by Pesmen-Rubin Commercial Art Studio, and he was let go after pre-Christmas rush.</u></p> <p><u>S-Iwerks-Disney Commercial Artists formed by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks, and it is in business one month.</u></p> <p><u>S-1920-Ub Iwerks and Walt Disney join the Kansas City Film Ad Company, and they are introduced to primitive animation.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
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	<p><u>out west to the veterans' hospital.</u></p> <p><u>I-1921- Walt Disney's parents and sister move to Portland.</u></p>		
1922-1923	<p><u>S&amp;I-Walt Disney moves to a Kansas City rooming house. He cannot pay rent, and he is kicked out. He sleeps in his office.</u></p> <p><u>S-1923-Walt Disney moves to Hollywood "to be a director".</u></p> <p>Moves in with his Uncle Robert Disney, Elias Disney's brother.</p>	<p><u>S-Walt Disney quits film Ad.</u></p> <p><u>S-1922-Laugh-O-Gram Films, Walt Disney's first cartoon company, is incorporated.</u></p> <p><u>I-1923-Files for Bankruptcy.</u></p> <p><u>S-Sets up a makeshift studio in Uncle Robert Disney's garage. New York distributor is interested in the Alice's</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>

	<p>At Walt Disney’s request, Walt and Roy Disney move in together to share an apartment.</p>	<p><u>Wonderland comedies unfinished from the Kansas City studio.</u></p> <p><u>S-Roy and Walt Disney launch partnership.</u></p>	
1924-1925	<p>1924-Lillian Bounds is hired to work in the Ink and Paint department for the Disney Brothers.</p> <p>Roy Disney asks girlfriend to move to California.</p> <p>1925-Roy and Edna Disney marry.</p> <p><u>S-July 13 Walt and Lilly marry in Lewiston, Idaho</u></p>	<p><u>S-The Disney Brothers Studio is set up on Kingswell Avenue.</u></p> <p><u>S-1924-First Alice comedy is shown.</u></p> <p><u>S-Ub Iwerks joins the team.</u></p> <p><u>S-Disneys get contract for 18 Alice comedies.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>

<p>1926-1927</p>	<p>1927-Walt and Roy Disney buy joining lots and build prefab houses on Lyric Avenue.</p> <p>Lilly Disney's mother moves in.</p> <p>Walt Disney gives Sunnee, the chow, to Lilly as a Christmas present.</p>	<p><u>S-1927-Disneys move to the Hyperion Avenue studio.</u></p> <p><u>S-Officially becomes the Walt Disney Studio.</u></p> <p><u>R-Alice comedies were enjoying success.</u></p> <p><u>S-Oswald the Lucky Rabbit series was launched.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
<p>1928</p>	<p><u>R-Walt and Lilly Disney enjoy life either at home or driving around looking at competing cartoons.</u></p>	<p><u>I-Walt Disney loses staff and rights to Oswald the Rabbit.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-On a train ride, Walt gets an idea for a cartoon mouse.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p>

		<p><u>S&amp;R-Mortimer Mouse was changed to Mickey Mouse.</u></p> <p><u>S-The first three Mickey Mouse cartoons were made: 1) <i>Plane Crazy</i>, 2) <i>Gallop in' Gaucho</i>, 3) <i>Steamboat Willie</i>.</u></p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney begins to experiment with sound.</u></p>	<p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
Fall 1928	Walt Disney works in New York City to finance new sound cartoon.	<p><u>S-Works with Cincephone to put sound in cartoons.</u></p> <p><u>S-November 18-<i>Steamboat Willie</i> premieres at New York's Colony Theater.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p>

			R-Return
1929		<p><u>S-Walt Disney voices Mickey Mouse</u></p> <p><u>S-Launch Silly Symphony series which were cartoons based on musical themes.</u></p> <p><u>S-Skeleton Dance premiered.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
1930-1931	<p><u>I-Walt and Lilly Disney try for children but have miscarriages.</u></p> <p>Hazel Bounds, Lilly Disney's sister, and niece move in.</p> <p>1930-Roy Edward Disney was born.</p>	<p><u>S&amp;R-Mickey Mouse licensing takes off.</u></p> <p><u>S-A Mickey Mouse comic strip is created.</u></p> <p><u>S-Mickey Mouse Clubs pop up at theaters around the country.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p>



	<p><u>I-1931-Walt Disney has a nervous breakdown from work pressures.</u></p> <p><u>He takes a long vacation to recoup.</u></p>	<p><u>I-Ub Iwerks and Carl Stalling leave Walt Disney's studio.</u></p>	<p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
1932	<p><u>S-Walt Disney starts playing polo at doctor's orders and plays with Hollywood celebrities.</u></p>	<p><u>S&amp;R-Walt Disney signs a three-year contract with Technicolor and releases <i>Flowers and Trees</i>. The first cartoon made with a three-color process.</u></p> <p><u><i>S-Flowers and Trees</i> is the first cartoon that wins an Academy Award.</u></p> <p><u>R-Walt Disney got an honorary Oscar for creating Mickey Mouse.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>

<p>1933</p>	<p>Walt and Lilly Disney build a new Tudor-style home.</p> <p><u>S-December 18- Diane Marie Disney is born.</u></p>	<p><u>S-Three Little Pigs is successful.</u></p> <p><u>S- “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?” turns to a major hit.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey’s three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
<p>1934</p>		<p><u>S-Donald Duck appears.</u></p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney acts out the story of Snow White for the studio animators on a soundstage.</u></p> <p><u>S-Disney Staff grows to 200.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey’s three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p>

			I-Initiation R-Return
1935-1937	<p><u>S-1935-Walt, Lilly, Roy, and Edna Disney take their first trip to Europe.</u></p> <p>In California, Walt makes home movies with sound.</p> <p><u>S-Sharon Mae Disney is adopted after Lilly miscarries.</u></p>	<p><u>S-Snow White goes into production.</u></p> <p><u>S-Studio adds 300 artists.</u></p> <p><i>The Band Concert</i> is the first Mickey Mouse cartoon.</p> <p><u>S&amp;R-1937-The “Old Mill” was released. It was filmed using a multiplane camera for three-dimensional effect.</u></p> <p><u>S-December 21-Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs premieres at Carthay Circle Theater.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>

<p>1938</p>	<p>Flora and Elias Disney's 50th wedding anniversary.</p> <p>Walt Disney's parents moved to Los Angeles into a house the brothers purchased for them.</p> <p><u>I-Flora Disney dies from the fumes of a malfunctioned furnace.</u></p>	<p><u>S-Snow White makes \$8 million in its first release.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-Work begins on Pinocchio, Fantasia, and Bambi.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-Disney brothers buy property in Burbank for a new studio.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
<p>1939-1940</p>	<p><u>S-Walt Disney begins thinking about a place for family amusement from outings with his daughters.</u></p>	<p><u>R-1939-Silly Symphony series ends.</u></p> <p><u>R-Walt Disney gets a special Oscar for Snow White.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-1940- Pinocchio premieres in February.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p>

		<p><u>S&amp;R-Fantasia premieres in November.</u></p> <p><u>S-Company moves to Burbank.</u></p> <p><u>I-Loses foreign markets due to World War II.</u></p>	<p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
1941	<p><u>I-Walt Disney is devastated by the animators’ strike.</u></p> <p><u>S-Lilly and Walt Disney travel to South America with artists</u></p>	<p><u>I-Strike puts artists against managers at the studio.</u></p> <p><u>I-Company begins making training films.</u></p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney and a team are invited on a South</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p>

	<p><u>and story men on a goodwill tour.</u></p> <p>Grace Bounds, Lilly Disney's sister, watches girls.</p> <p><u>I-Elias Disney dies.</u></p>	<p><u>American tour during the strike.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-Dumbo is released in December.</u></p> <p><u>I-The army moves troops and equipment into the Burbank Studio.</u></p>	<p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
1942-1945	<p><u>S-Weekend outings with daughters continue.</u></p> <p>Weekend visits to the studio include bike riding roller skating.</p> <p><u>S-Disney family vacations at Palm Springs Dude ranch.</u></p>	<p><u>S-1942- Walt Disney receives the prestigious Irving Thalberg Memorial Award.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-Bambi premiers.</u></p> <p>Production of war and propaganda films</p> <p>1943- <i>Der Fuehrer's Face</i></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>

		<p><i>Victory Through Air Power.</i></p> <p>One of two films from the South America trip produced.</p> <p><u><i>R-Saludos Amigos</i></u></p> <p><u>S-1944- The studio explores the idea of television.</u></p> <p><u>R-1945- <i>The Three Caballeros</i></u></p>	
1946		<p><u>S-May 1- Returned to Marceline to refresh for a project.</u></p> <p><u>S, I, &amp;R-November 12- <i>Song of the South.</i></u></p> <p><u>combining live action and</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than</p>

		<p><u>animation, is released as is.</u></p> <p><u>Make Mine Music was the first of several cartoon package features.</u></p> <p><u>I-Studio lays off 300 workers.</u></p>	<p>one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
1947-1949	<p><u>I-1947-Walt Disney testifies before the House Un-American Activities Committee.</u></p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney buys an electric train set.</u></p> <p><u>S-1948-Travels to railroad fair with Ward Kimball.</u></p> <p><u>S-1949-Purchase Carolwood Drive</u></p>	<p><u>S&amp;R-1948-Seal Island, the first True-Life Adventure, is booked in the Crown Theatre in Pasadena in December.</u></p> <p><u>S-1949- So Dear to My Heart releases-mostly live action.</u></p> <p><u>S-Talk of Mickey Mouse Park accelerates</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>



	<p><u>property with room for the train set.</u></p> <p>Walt, Lilly, Diane, and Sharon Disney take a two-month trip to Europe with a 5 week stop in England for the shooting of Treasure Island.</p>	<p><u>S-Work in progress with several animated features and the live-action <i>Treasure Island.</i></u></p>	
1950	<p>Disneys move into Carolwood.</p> <p><u>S&amp;R-Walt Disney writes to his sister that he's going to "take time to play with his trains."</u></p>	<p><u>S&amp;R-Cinderella released.</u></p> <p><u><i>Treasure Island</i> released</u></p> <p><u>"One Hour in Wonderland" television special happens.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>

<p>1951-1952</p>	<p><u>S-Walt Disney spends time playing with trains and names his set the Carolwood Pacific.</u></p> <p><u>Builds himself “Granny Kincaid’s”</u></p> <p>Diane Disney starts college at the University of Southern California.</p> <p><u>R-The family spends more time in Europe.</u></p>	<p><u>S&amp;R-Alice in Wonderland is released.</u></p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney begins experimenting with a traveling show of miniatures.</u></p> <p><u>S-The studio diversifies with more television specials and live-action films.</u></p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney plans for an amusement park across the street from the studio.</u></p> <p><u>S-WED Enterprises is started.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey’s three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
<p>1953</p>	<p><u>I-Walt Disney borrows from life insurance and sells his house in Palm</u></p>	<p><u>S&amp;R-Peter Pan is released.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s</p>

	<p><u>Springs to finance Disneyland.</u></p>	<p><u>S-True-Life adventure <i>The Living Desert</i> released and won the Academy Award for Best Documentary.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-Walt Disney hires Stanford Research Institute to select a site for Disneyland.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;I-Herb Ryman creates an expansive Disneyland concept painting which Roy Disney used to raise money.</u></p>	<p>Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
1954	<p><u>S-Diane Disney and Ron Miller are married.</u></p> <p><u>Sharon Disney starts college at the University of Arizona.</u></p>	<p><u>S&amp;I-Construction begins at Disneyland.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;I-“Disneyland” premieres on ABC and wins the Emmy for best variety show.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than</p>

	<u>S&amp;R-Christopher Disney Miller is born.</u>	<u>S&amp;I- “Davy Crockett” is a hit.</u>  <u>R-20,000 Leagues Under the Sea first live-action American made film wins Academy Award for special effects.</u>	one category will have multiple letters.  S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return
1955	<u>R-Walt and Lilly Disney celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary at a pre-opening Disneyland party.</u>	<u>S&amp;I-Disneyland opens in July</u>  <u>S- “The Mickey Mouse Club” premiered in October.</u>  <u>R-Lady and the Tramp released.</u>	The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey’s three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.  S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return
1956-1957	<u>S-1956-Extensive family interviews are</u>	<u>R-1956-Disneyland expanded.</u>	The timeline events are coded with the following

	<p><u>done with Walt Disney and his family by Pete Martin.</u></p> <p><u>R-Joanna Miller, second grandchild, is born.</u></p> <p><u>R-Marceline park and swimming pool named after Walt.</u></p> <p><u>R-1957- Tamara Miller, third grandchild, is born.</u></p> <p>Sharon Disney has a bit part in <i>Johnny Tremain</i> and works for the studio as a secretary.</p>	<p><u>R-Midwest premiere of <i>The Great Locomotive Chase</i> in Marceline.</u></p> <p><u>S-Walt Disney thought of purchasing his Marceline boyhood home for a rural experience.</u></p> <p><u>S-RETLAW purchased land in Marceline.</u></p> <p><u>R-Fess Parker is featured in three major films including <i>Davy Crockett</i></u></p> <p><u>R-1957- <i>Johnny Tremain</i> and <i>Old Yeller</i> released.</u></p>	<p>letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
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	<p><u>R-Walt and Lilly</u></p> <p><u>Disney build and move</u></p> <p><u>into a new vacation</u></p> <p><u>home in Palm Springs.</u></p> <p><u>R-Go on a two-month</u></p> <p><u>Europe trip.</u></p> <p><u>S-Ron Miller joins the</u></p> <p><u>studio.</u></p>		
1958-1959	<p><u>I&amp;R-Sharon Disney</u></p> <p><u>marris Bob Brown.</u></p>	<p><u>S&amp;R-1959-Sleeping</u></p> <p><u>Beauty premier (the last</u></p> <p><u>animated fairy-tale feature</u></p> <p><u>of Walt's life.)</u></p> <p><i>The Shaggy Dog</i> released</p> <p>with great success.</p> <p><u>R-Monorail added to</u></p> <p><u>Disneyland.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-Walt Disney is</u></p> <p><u>looking to create an</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are</p> <p>coded with the following</p> <p>letters to reflect events</p> <p>falling in each of Hero's</p> <p>Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than</p> <p>one category will have</p> <p>multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>

		<u>“eastern Disneyland” with a city of the future.</u>	
1960	<u>R-Lilly and Walt Disney continue to vacation at Smoke Tree Ranch in Palm Springs.</u>  <u>R-Walt Disney opens the Walt Disney Elementary School in Marceline, Missouri.</u>  <u>R-Walt Disney takes up lawn bowling.</u>  <u>R-Jennifer Miller, grandchild number four, is born.</u>	<u>S&amp;R-Walt Disney was in charge of pageantry for the Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley, California.</u>  <u>R-Swiss Family Robinson and Pollyanna are in production at the studio.</u>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
1961	<u>R-Walter Elias Disney Miller, grandchild number 5, is born.</u>	<u>R-101 Dalmatians and The Absent Minded Professor are successful.</u>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero’s</p>

	<p><u>I-Herbert Disney, Walt Disney's brother, dies.</u></p>	<p><u>S-The Wonderful World of Color premieres on NBC.</u></p>	<p>Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
1962-1963	<p><u>S&amp;R-Walt Disney becomes dedicated to creating the California Institute of the Arts.</u></p> <p>1963-Ron Miller, grandchild number six, is born.</p> <p>Walt Disney begins to travel on a 15-passenger Grumman Gulfstream purchased by the studio.</p>	<p><u>R-Dozens of live-action pieces in production.</u></p> <p><u>R-Sword and the Stone premieres.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-The Tiki Room at Disneyland is the first public show of Audio-Animatronics.</u></p> <p><u>S&amp;R-Walt Disney works on plans for the 1964 World's Fair, east-coast</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>



	<u>S-Bob Brown becomes a WED planner</u>	<u>Disneyland, and city of tomorrow.</u>	
1964		<u>S&amp;R-Mary Poppins is released and wins five academy awards.</u>  <u>R-New York World's Fair opens with four of the top attractions being created by Disney.</u>  <u>S-Walt Disney receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom.</u>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation I-Initiation R-Return</p>
1965	<u>R-Walt and Lilly travel to Europe.</u>  <u>R-Visit Disney Street in London.</u>	<u>R-Four World's Fair attractions moved to Disneyland.</u>  <u>R-Walt and Roy Disney settle on Florida as a spot for the east coast park,</u>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than</p>

		<p><u>buying 27,443 acres for about \$5 million.</u></p> <p><u>R-Plans for Disney World are announced at a November press conference.</u></p>	<p>one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
<p>January- October 1966</p>	<p><u>R-Walt Disney is the grand marshal at the Tournament of Roses parade.</u></p> <p><u>R-Victoria Brown, Sharon Disney Brown and Bob Brown's daughter, is born.</u></p> <p><u>R-In July, Walt Disney rents a boat for a family vacation with all seven grandchildren to cruise through British Columbia.</u></p>	<p><u>R-New Orleans Square opens at Disneyland with several other attractions.</u></p> <p><u>R-U.S. accepts bid to open the Mineral King Resort.</u></p> <p><u>R-Studio releases <i>Lt. Robin Crusoe</i> (based on a story by Retlaw Yensid.)</u></p> <p><u>R-Featurette <i>Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree</i>.</u></p> <p><u>R-<i>The Jungle Book</i> is in production.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>

	<p><u>R-Midget Autopia ride was donated for use in Marceline.</u></p> <p><u>I-Walt Disney cancels last minute trip to Marceline for the opening due to health issues.</u></p> <p><u>R-Walt and Lilly Disney and Sharon Disney and Bob Brown travel to Williamsburg, VA.</u></p>		
<p>November-December 1966</p>	<p><u>I-November 2- Walt goes to St. Joseph Hospital for tests.</u></p> <p><u>I-X-Rays reveal a spot on his lung.</u></p>	<p><u>I&amp;R-Walt Disney visits WED and studio for the last time on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Thanksgiving week.</u></p>	<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts. Events fitting more than</p>

	<p><u>I-November 7-Spot is removed.</u></p> <p>Walt Disney is released two week later, visits the studio, and has Thanksgiving with his family.</p> <p><u>I&amp;R-Travels to Palm Springs with Lilly Disney but stays only one night.</u></p> <p><u>I-November 30&gt;Returns to the hospital.</u></p>		<p>one category will have multiple letters.</p> <p>S-Separation</p> <p>I-Initiation</p> <p>R-Return</p>
<p>December 15, 1966</p>	<p><u>I-Walt Disney dies.</u></p>		<p>The timeline events are coded with the following letters to reflect events falling in each of Hero's Journey's three parts.</p> <p>Events fitting more than</p>

			one category will have multiple letters.  S-Separation  I-Initiation  R-Return
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