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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

BEST STORYTELLING PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Calvin Bonds

July, 2016

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Calvin Bonds

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great appreciation that I acknowledge the dissertation committee who was my guide throughout this process. Thank you helping me to make this dream a reality. To my dissertation committee members:

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. Chairperson

Lani Simpao Fraizer, Ed.D.

Gabriella Miramontes, Ed.D.

I also want to thank my family and friends for encouraging me. This is your degree as much as it is mine. Thank you for every kind word and every uplifting moment.

## VITA

## EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

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## EXPERIENCE

## CBONDS ENTERPRISES

Global Leadership Training Consultant/ Master Storyteller.....May 2012 – Present

- Conduct leadership training to various management and frontline employees within companies through interactive storytelling and role playing ([www.bondstorytelling.com](http://www.bondstorytelling.com))
  - Example: *Diversity and Inclusion Training* (High Level Program Design, Training) addressing minorities, gender, age (generational differences), sexual orientation, education, disability, height/weight, ELS (English Language Learners), etc.
- Drive sales, increase production, and create and maintain a high performance environment within the workplace.
- Construct stories to explain complex systems, policies and procedures for global entities.
- Foster strong relationships within organizations, and with multiple organizations through “systems thinking” learning and the impact of “community of practice.”
- Provide team training to ensure that departments are in compliance with applicable, regulatory, and statutory regulations.
- Train the trainers to align with the organization’s mission, culture, and understanding of diverse employees through emotional intelligence
- Use leadership training to encourage results-oriented performance

CALVIN WALKER COMMUNITY BUILDING, Los Angeles, CA

Nonprofit Organization, Co-Founder.....June 2006 – Present

- Train teachers on Department of Education Standards.
- Facilitate business workshops to participants in the urban community.
- Develop and implement afterschool programs for schools within Los Angeles.
- Design anti-bullying campaign for urban organizations that work with students.
- Compose and design curricula for nonprofit and for-profit organizations.
- Teach Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator to students in the community.
- Introduce the business of fashion and entertainment to Upward Bound Students (CSU Channel Islands).

## OCCASSIONS and EVENTS, Lagos, Nigeria.

Leadership Trainer / Event Coordinator (Part-time).....Jan. 2009 – Dec. 2009

- Trained employees on leadership skills such as
  - Team Building, Supervisory Skills, Foundational Leadership, Diversity, Conflict Resolution, Time Management, Etc.
- Planned marketing and promotion events

SILVERBIRD ENTERTAINMENT Lagos, Nigeria (Africa) January 2009 – Dec 2009

Leadership Trainer / Project Coordinator Consultant

- Incorporated Marketing and Promotions for upcoming events
- Spearheaded the creative team for production of various entertainment projects (television shows, fashion shows, etc)
- Organized events for the Silverbird Galleria (Mall attached to the Entertainment group)
- Interviewed and Hired Employees to work in the various sectors of the Entertainment Department

## LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (LAUSD), Los Angeles, CA

High School Instructor.....Feb 2005 –May 2012

- Delivered Standards-based instruction in English and English as a Second Language (ESL) to General Education and mild-to-moderate disabled students in a Special Day Class.

## VOA TRIO UPWARD BOUND, Los Angeles, CA.

Educational Advisor/Project Coordinator.....March 2002 – Feb. 2005

- Trained and supervised teachers, tutors, and other staff on leadership
- Provided guidance, direction and support to participants that come from inner-city environments.
- Advised students in the areas of program and admissions requirements, admission status, financial aid and the transfer of credits from other institutions.
- Evaluated test scores, previous education, and transfer credits for applicant eligibility.
- Developed and implemented SAT preparation workshops for program participants.
- Helped graduates get accepted to colleges and universities.

## FRITZ COMPANIES FEDEX TRADE NETWORKS INC, Memphis, TN.

Import Coordinator in Brokerage.....April 1999 – Feb. 2002

- Tracked shipments and met quotas
- Filled out import documentation, compiling carrier route assignments
- Developed a good rapport and “peace of mind” about their packages and the shipping process.
- Communicated with claims insurance companies when necessary.
- Coordinated shipping for custom agents for clearance with overseas deliveries

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Norwalk Chamber of Commerce	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
Lakewood Chamber of Commerce	Downey Chamber of Commerce
Who’s Who Among American Colleges and Universities	Community Collaborative Network, Cerritos

## ABSTRACT

Effective teaching strategies can be defined as utilizing the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy, which include understanding, application and analysis (Flynn, Mesibov, Vermette & Smith, 2004). Teachers that use effective teaching strategies can significantly impact the future earnings of their students. Students that are recipients of these strategies receive a higher quality of K-12 education, which leads to a higher caliber of colleges and universities chosen. As a result of the higher education institutions attended, students become more competitive when entering an evolving workforce, earning higher salaries. This study explores the effective teaching strategy of storytelling. It identifies best practices of storytelling leaders in education. The literature reveals a link between successful storytelling practices and adult learning theory. There is also a connection between the impact of storytelling and the neuroscience of the brain. The findings are expected to help leaders in education who want to practice storytelling in their leadership practice. As a result of interviewing participants in this study, several themes were discovered that pointed out key factors in best storytelling practices. Some key findings include using stories to encourage critical thinking skills, heighten self-awareness among students, and activate brain triggers that produce an emotional connection around a subject matter. The data collected in study is believed to contribute to the effectiveness of future storytellers who wish to use storytelling as an effective teaching strategy in their leadership practice.

*Keywords:* Effective Teaching Strategies, Storytelling, Adult Learning Theory, Neuroscience

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The objective of this phenomenological study was to explore best practices of storytelling leaders as effective teaching strategies. Specifically, K-12 and higher education teachers were interviewed. The study sought to use the data to compile themes that could be used to help current teachers and future teachers who could use storytelling as an effective teaching strategy.

The following story will illustrate the intent of the study:

One day a young lady was driving along with her father. They came upon a storm and the young lady asked her father, “What should I do?”

Father said, “Keep driving.” Cars began to pull over to the side, the storm was getting worse.

“What should I do?” The young lady asked?

“Keep driving,” her father replied.

On up a few feet, she noticed that eighteen-wheelers were also pulling over. She told her father, “I must pull over, I can barely see ahead. It is terrible and everyone is pulling over!”

Her father told her, “Don’t give up, just keep driving!”

Now the storm was terrible, but she never stopped driving and soon she could see a little more clearly. After a couple of miles she was again on dry land and the sun came out.

Her father said, “Now you can pull over and get out.”

Young Lady said, “But why now?”

Father said, “When you get out, look back at all the people that gave up and are still in the storm, because you never gave up your storm is now over.”

This is a testimony for anyone who is going through “hard times.” Just because everyone else, even the strongest, gives up. You don’t have to ... if you keep going, soon your storm will be over and the Sun will shine upon your face again. (Syed, 2015, para. 1)

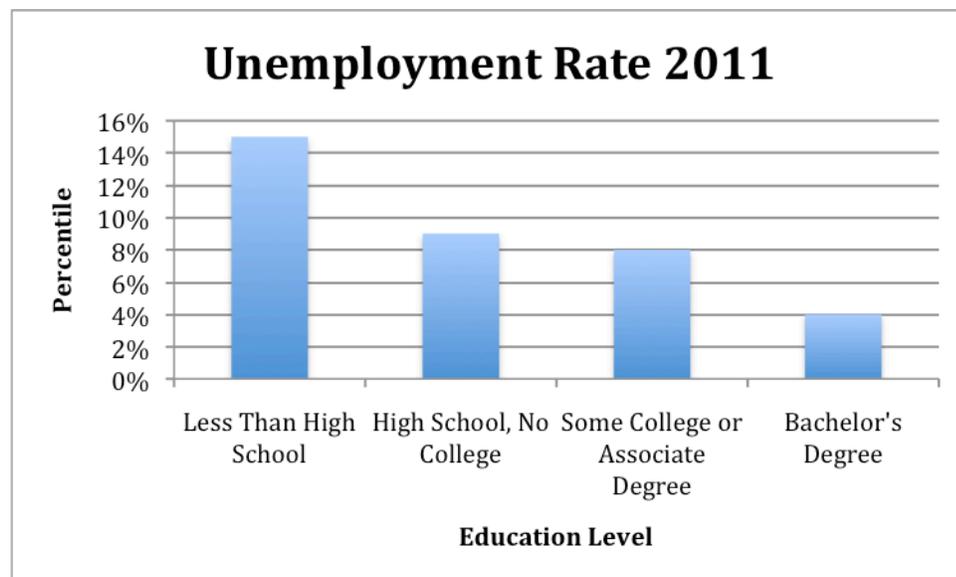
In the classroom, stories like these can be used to encourage students to continue working hard although they may have a tough year ahead in learning. In sharing such a story with students, teachers would be performing an act of compassion, making a connection with students and tapping into their emotions. Indeed, storytelling is one of the many ways teachers can impact the lives of students.

A teacher’s impact on their students is crucial because it can lead to a change in future earnings. Economists Raj Chetty and John Friedman of Harvard University and Jonah Rockoff of Columbia University (as cited in Lee-Chua, 2013) studied 20 years of data on over a million pupils in a metropolitan school district, including information on parents’ tax records and teachers’ performance within schools. They found that improvements in the quality of teaching by value-added (VA) teachers had a direct correlation to the quality of colleges attended by the VA teachers’ students. VA refers to changes that teachers can make on instructional strategies. Ultimately the earnings of students proved to be higher because the quality of education made them more competitive in the workforce. Therefore, teachers’ influence on students’ future earnings also inadvertently affects unemployment rates.

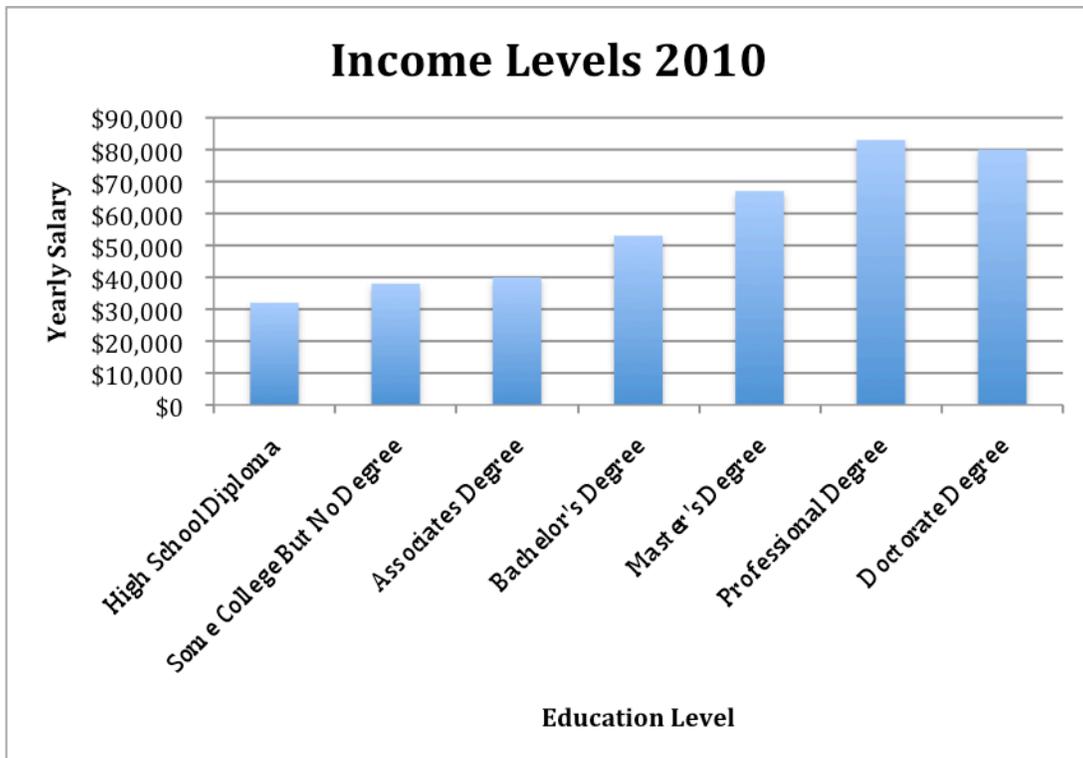
The rate of unemployment in the U.S. decreased to 5% October of 2015 from 5.7 % in January of 2015 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). This means that out of the 7.9 million people who were unemployed in January 2015, 1.1 million of them found jobs by October 2015. This 5% serves as a midpoint, considering the fact that from 1948 until 2015 the highest

unemployment rate has been 10.80% in November 1982. Conversely, the lowest unemployment was 2.5% in May 1953 (Trading Economics, 2015).

Education contributes to the aforementioned unemployment percentages because it has a direct effect on unemployment (Robicheaux, 2011). The better a person in a particular community is educated, the less unemployment that community endures. Education levels cause unemployment percentages to vary. Figure 1 summarizes variations of unemployment based on education levels. Figure 2 shows average yearly income based on education levels.



*Figure 1.* Education and unemployment percentage comparisons in 2011. Adapted from “Education Affects Unemployment Suffering,” by R. Robicheaux, 2011, retrieved from [http://blog.al.com/businessnews/2011/09/bob\\_robicheaux\\_education\\_affec.html](http://blog.al.com/businessnews/2011/09/bob_robicheaux_education_affec.html). Copyright 2011 by the author.



*Figure 2.* Education and income comparisons in 2010. Adapted from “Education Affects Unemployment Suffering,” by R. Robicheaux, 2011, retrieved from [http://blog.al.com/businessnews/2011/09/bob\\_robicheaux\\_education\\_affec.html](http://blog.al.com/businessnews/2011/09/bob_robicheaux_education_affec.html). Copyright 2011 by the author.

K-12 schools and higher education institutions are working together to make sure students are educated and prepared for the working world. There are connections among education, future earnings, and unemployment. These organizations understand the impact of education on future leaders in the workplace. One initiative that is currently in process is the partnership of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) with the Partnership of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

The CCSS is a set of academic standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts/literacy (ELA) that provides guidelines for a student’s knowledge and capabilities at the end of each grade, with the aim of being college and career ready. These standards were designed to help students achieve the same levels of education regardless of their socio-economic background. As a result of CCSS, students should graduate with a heightened awareness of

reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Common Core gives teachers the independence to motivate students to learn as long as each student is able to show what they have learned at the conclusion of the academic school year (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2015).

The Partnership of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC, n.d.) is a group of states working together to develop an assessment in lieu of 11<sup>th</sup> grade standardized tests that align with CCSS. It also helps teachers and parents identify a student's learning needs, as well as where that student may be excelling. In parallel to the CCSS, this assessment is designed to help students, regardless of their socio-economic status, gain access to an equal education that will prepare them for college and careers. This assessment benefits higher education teachers by informing them of each student's performance levels when entering their institutions. Then, the teacher's job is to motivate students to learn at those starting levels.

In this partnership, Common Core sets the expectations for each grade, whereas PARCC provides a valid and reliable evaluation of each student's progress toward those expectations (PARCC, n.d.). Based on the students' results of the PARCC assessments, they possibly would enter into entry-level, credit bearing courses at postsecondary institutions without remediation in ELA/Literacy and/or Math. This guaranteed exemption from taking remedial classes is acknowledged in conjunction with more than 700 colleges and universities. Whether instructing students in alignment with the Common Core Standards, or reviewing PARCC assessments, teachers must find ways to motivate students to learn, regardless of conditions or backgrounds.

In the 2012-2013 academic year, there were 6,299,451 K-12 students enrolled in California alone (California Department of Education, 2015). This population consisted of the following ethnic groups: White, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black, and Native American.

Each culture comes with different influences and learning approaches. It is the job of teachers to make sure their instructional strategies are effective enough so that all unique student populations acquire knowledge through engaging and interesting teaching, especially in view of the fact that a lack of efficacy could lead to long-term negative consequences. Ineffective teaching strategies could lead to a lack of interest that ultimately could result in student dropout (“Why Teens Drop Out of School,” 2008).

In 2008, a study conducted with 5,000 high school students across the United States showed that lack of interest was the leading reason that students dropped out of school between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Other reasons included insufficient educational support, outside influences, special needs, financial problems, substance abuse, depression and illness, physical abuse, teenage pregnancy, and alternative lifestyles. The numbers showed that 70% of the high school dropouts complained about losing interest in the curriculum because of the way it was being taught (“Why Teens Drop Out of School,” 2008). Teachers motivate students to learn; it is their job to stimulate students’ minds and keep students engaged. Because they facilitate learning, teachers have a moral responsibility to motivate students by any effective teaching strategy necessary (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004).

Having an effective teaching strategy is important because it can help students focus on the material (Hussain, 2015). Far too often, students are not engaged in lessons because of a lack of focus, which can be attributed to many factors, including but not limited to social circumstances or emotional pressures that are beyond their control. It then becomes the teacher’s job to employ effective strategies to provide a welcome environment where the student can engage in learning while he or she is in class. Furthermore, by employing effective teaching strategies, a teacher can clear up any misconceptions about the material. A seemingly

disinterested student may actually be struggling to grasp what is being taught. Asking students to repeat what was said is one strategy that can increase chances of learning because by doing so, they are able to hear the lesson once the first time, and then again when they say what they learned aloud. Repeating what the teacher says also allows students to become more engaged through participation. This element of student participation is an essential factor in learning. Teachers can also use a group of instructional teaching strategies to ensure learning is happening. Educational leader Robert J. Marzano conducted a meta-analysis of various instructional strategies that teachers often use in the classroom to determine which ones were effective. As a result, he came up with nine instructional strategies best used in the classroom, one of which is reinforcing recognition, which is affirming student achievement through positive words. Teachers often use recognition in helping a student feel proud of his/her accomplishments (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

### **Statement of Problem**

**The need for storytelling.** Effective strategies are critically important in helping students from diverse backgrounds access learning. As stated by Chen (2005), the majority of first-generation college students are immigrants of color, 24 or older and from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In 2004, 42% of students in elementary and secondary schools were people of color. These categories included Black, Hispanic, Asian/ Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2007). Although the numbers of minorities in education are rising, larger institutions have failed to foster success in these student groups. Studies show that students from diverse backgrounds can easily be isolated on a college campus and feel marginalized when they are not around others from the same ethnicity (Richardson & Skinner, 1992). Cultivating narratives in learning environments through

storytelling can encourage the sharing of lived experiences among students. These lived experiences can invite students to delve into a deeper understanding of themselves and others. Bringing their stories into the classroom helps students to partake in construction knowledge, which breaks down walls of marginalization (Jehangir, 2010).

**The case for storytelling.** Storytelling is an effective teaching strategy that is also important in education as it pertains to teaching lessons (Catapano, n.d.). Certain practices in storytelling make it an effective teaching strategy. One practice is setting examples of what to do and what not to do by sharing one's own stories of success, failure, and lessons learned. Students would need to be able to analyze and synthesize what they hear so they can relate it to their own personal experiences: a process that aligns with the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Flynn et al., 2004). By performing this analysis, students then become aware of options when faced with similar situations.

Another storytelling practice is beginning class sessions with a story as the introduction as a way of getting students' attention after the bell rings. Stories at the beginning of class also set the tone for the learning and language objectives for the class. A third practice of storytelling in education is to illustrate meaning. Stories can be used to explain concepts to students when they are not able to comprehend the facts and figures involved. Storytelling games are another form of effective practice that can be used to introduce meanings and describe concepts (Lipman, 1994). All three of these uses of storytelling can be incorporated into today's constantly changing educational system.

As the educational system evolves, teachers have an obligation to provide students with the best and most consistent educational opportunities. Looking for ways to deliver material to help students learn more effectively is an ideal for which all institutions of learning strive,

especially if they are to decrease dropout rates. Research has identified various effective strategies that can be used to improve teaching, such as: identifying commonalities and diversity, effective note taking, acknowledging progress and encouraging effort, nonlinguistic representations, cooperative learning, discussing goals and providing constructive criticism, generating and testing hypotheses, encouraging questions, offering cues, and advance organizers, and storytelling. As such, this study focused on storytelling practices as an emergent effective teaching strategy.

### **Purpose Statement**

Accordingly, the goal of this study was to determine:

- Effective best practice strategies and challenges for leaders in education who use storytelling.
- How leaders who use storytelling as a leadership practice measure their success.
- What recommendations leaders in education can offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used in this study.

1. What strategies and practices do leaders in education who use storytelling employ?
2. What challenges do leaders in education who use storytelling in their leadership practice face?
3. How do leaders who use storytelling as a leadership practice measure their success?
4. What recommendations do leaders in education offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool?

## Significance of Study

Mathew James (2014) stated, “Stories define us, shape us, control us, and make us. Not every human culture in the world is literate, but every single culture tells stories” (p. 1). This study can benefit teachers by helping students define themselves, shaping cultures in diverse environments, and helping them control classroom flow through interactive and engaging activities. Using these benefits, teachers could adapt practices that would minimize boredom in the classroom by showing that stories are equally as compelling as essays and books. Just like movies, stories can entertain students, raising a level of enthusiasm. An example would be allowing students to add to a story based on their own experiences. Stories can also serve as warnings, helping students consider safety and other critical issues. For example, the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* could serve as a warning against talking to strangers.

This study can give some insight on practices for addressing diversity issues. In a class with many English Language Learners, students and teachers may experience gaps in connecting and understanding each other. Stories can help students become open-minded to differences by creating a platform for learning about how each one of them was raised. Stories can motivate students to want to learn and speak English. Telling stories to connect cultures can also enhance a sense of community in the room.

The results would also show how stories could be a medium for building student/teacher relationships. Teachers often have challenges developing bonds with students. By telling stories students can relate better to teachers. Teachers can tell stories that could remind students of their own personal experiences. These personal experiences would allow students to open up about their own lives, which could result in engagement. Ultimately the significance of this study

could decrease dropout rates because storytelling could be used as a means of increasing motivation among students (“Why Teens Drop Out of School,” 2008).

### **Key Definitions**

Certain terms will appear frequently throughout this study. For the purposes of this research, the following terms are defined for the reader’s reference:

- *Aesthetic* is defined as sensory perceptions rooted in emotions (Hansen, Ropo, & Sauer, 2007).
- *Andragogy* is the way adults learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012).
- *Bloom’s Taxonomy* is a method of classifying levels of learning in the educational system ranging in the following categories from lowest to highest: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Flynn, Mesibov, Vermette, & Smith, 2004).
- *Chronotoping* is the articulation of space and time, and is often seen in the telling of childhood stories (Paquette, 2013).
- *Digital storytelling* utilizes computer-based tools that involve multimedia like graphics, audio, video, and web publishing to broaden minds in learning and elevate the experiences of both teachers and students (Digital Storytelling, n.d.; Sadik, 2008).
- *Effective classroom strategies* are practices that cause students to go beyond simply recalling information, and challenge them to reach the higher levels of thinking in Bloom’s Taxonomy (Flynn et al., 2004).
- *Ego* is the part of the mind that uses logic, memory, and judgment to satisfy the needs of the id (Freud, 1957).

- *Elaboration* is integrating information with what is already known (Swap, Lenard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001).
- *Episodic memory* is the recall of events directly experienced, as opposed to semantic memory (Swap et al., 2001).
- *Availability Heuristic* is a story that is more available from memory because the chances are greater for it to be believed (Swap et al., 2001).
- *Id* is where biological urges, drives, or instincts are derived (Freud, 1957).
- *Organizational culture* is “a system of shared meaning held by its members that distinguishes their organizations from other organizations” (Brady & Shar Haley, 2013, p. 40).
- *Principles Narrative Paradigm Theory* is a storytelling model that exchanges information based on value by using empathy from a cognitive and emotional position to help participants navigate the world around them (Barker & Gower, 2010).
- *Semantic memory* is general knowledge about the world that is not directly experienced (Swap et al., 2001).
- *Storytelling* is a unique way organizations communicate to generate production outcomes, transfer knowledge, and form ideas that add value (Benjamin, 2006; Comstock, 2006; Ellyatt, 2002; Poulton, 2005; Schein, 1984).
- *Superego* is the part of the mind that focuses on society’s rules and restrictions and reminds the ego of them (Freud, 1957).
- *Transformational leadership* is the process where an individual engages others and inspires change by being energetic, being enthusiastic, and carrying a certain level of

passion in trying to help followers reach their fullest potential (Cherry, 2015; Northouse, 2004).

### **Key Assumptions**

The key assumptions of this study include the following:

1. The research conducted in this study was assumed to be beneficial in helping teachers discover best practices in storytelling as leaders.
2. Findings from interviews with participants were assumed to support other research conducted regarding these best practices in storytelling.

### **Limitations of the Study**

1. Bias may have influenced the interview and interpretation process.
2. The population may not cover a wide range of diversity in ethnic and cultural backgrounds, so the generalizability of findings to a more diverse background may be limited.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter 1 explored effective teaching strategies in education. In highlighting these strategies, the practice of storytelling surfaced, which will serve as the focal point of this study. The objective of this study was to uncover effective best practice strategies for leaders in education who use storytelling. This study offers significance for teachers who are looking to learn best practices in storytelling. The next chapter will review literature related to this study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The objective of this literature review is to highlight and define effective teaching strategies in education, including a historical overview of storytelling. This review will introduce the theoretical framework that relates to this study, in addition to strategies and practices employed by leaders in education who use storytelling and the challenges they face when they pair storytelling with their leadership practice. The review concludes with an examination of how leaders measure success when storytelling and their recommendations for future leaders.

The organizational structure of this literature review is presented in the following major sections: overview of storytelling, evidence of storytelling, and storytelling in leadership. The first major section centers on a definition of storytelling and its relationship to today's practices. The second major section provides supportive evidence of storytelling in the areas of andragogy and neuroscience. The third major section focuses on storytelling in leadership by exploring transformational leadership and education.

### Overview of Storytelling

Storytelling is a unique way that organizations communicate to generate production outcomes, transfer knowledge, and form ideas that add value (Benjamin, 2006; Comstock, 2006; Ellyatt, 2002; Poulton, 2005; Schein, 1984). Slowly, over time, Homo sapiens began the process of transferring knowledge by linking sounds together to represent ideas, which eventually evolved into a language (Hamilton, 2010). People used this language to transfer knowledge to each other, which eventually became stories.

The word *story* traces back to Indo-European origins. Its etymology is linked to the Indo-European word *ueid*, which refers to seeing an object or vision (Benjamin, 2006). The term *ueid*

made its way to India and appeared in Sanskrit as *veda*, where the significance became *knowledge* in the form of Hindu religious texts. This form of knowledge spread to Greece where the word became *eidos*, which means has to do with an idea formed in the mind (Benjamin, 2006). Although the word *eidos* and other words evolved into other words and meanings, the actual word *storytelling* kept its original Indo-European word *ueid* (Benjamin, 2006). This Indo-European word that referred to storytelling is generally associated with the oral and written traditions, including the telling of stories, as well as the writing of symbols and drawing of pictures from hunters and gathers. Dating back as far as 15,000 B.C., the Lascaux Caves in the Pyrenees Mountains in Southern France displayed images that showed hunting practices and rituals (Benjamin, 2006). The written tradition of storytelling was illustrated on the caves. It was how people keep traditions alive back then.

As humanity evolved, in 700 B.C. in Mesopotamia, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* became the first printed story and is widely regarded as the first great work of literature. This story is about Gilgamesh, his adventures with his friend Enkidu, and his quest to live forever. *Aesop's Fables* surfaced around 200 B.C.E., but before they were written down they passed through the oral tradition for hundreds of years. Aesop was a Phrygian slave set free by his Greek master because of his ability to tell charming and witty stories. *Aesop's Fables* are composed of legends, myths, and political parables where animals often symbolized a vice or a virtue. For example, the fox was cunning, the lion was ferocity, the grasshopper was laziness, and the crow was vanity. In alignment with *Aesop's fables*, the Biblical *Old Testament* is also a written work that was passed down many years before it was written. It was created from the accounts of friends, families, and communities who witnessed significant wars, deeds, and events. Jesus Christ was one of the principle storytellers in the *New Testament* scriptures in the *Bible*. The apostles documented

Jesus' used parables to teach lessons to audiences he encountered. William Shakespeare is known as one of the greatest writers in the English language. He became famous for his poetry and comedic, historical, tragic, and romantic plays.

Through the years the customs of telling stories evolved and in the 1980s became popular in the form of spoken philosophical narratives. This phenomenon spread to economics, cognitive psychology, and anthropology. As a result of this emergent paradigm, some organizational leaders began to listen to the arguments of storytellers and decided to incorporate storytelling in their own fields. As a result, storytelling in management and organization have become mainstream norms (Corvellec, 2004). Steve Jobs, former CEO of Apple Inc., was known for his ability to craft stories. Whether he was making an announcement or launching a new product he used his ability to tell stories to captivate audiences around the world. Jobs was able to appeal to the emotions of his listeners by expressing authenticity through his own stories. This ability aligns with a theoretical case for storytelling in the neuroscience of the brain (Kazlev, 2003).

### **Effective Teaching Practices**

Teaching strategies are a way to help students stay motivated in the classroom. A study conducted with 32 students at Ankara University determined that teacher strategies had a major impact on the way students learned and their interests in school (Karakoc & Simsek, 2004). One can develop a clearer understanding of effective teaching strategies by exploring Bloom's Taxonomy. Benjamin Samuel Bloom supervised a group of educational psychologists in developing a hierarchical system that categorizes observed student behavior and that can be used to classify lower and higher levels of learning in the educational system. These classifications exist in three domains: affective, psychomotor, and cognitive. In particular, the cognitive categories from lowest to highest consist of knowledge, understanding, application, analysis,

synthesis, and evaluation (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou, McNett, & Harvey 2003; Bloom, 1956). Effective teaching strategies can be defined as utilizing higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, such that students go beyond simply recalling information (Flynn et al., 2004).

Knowledge can be defined as the recall of learned material, consisting of facts, definitions, methodologies, and processes (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou et al., 2003; Bloom, 1956). According to Adams (2015), knowledge can be accessed via relatively straightforward approaches like multiple choice or short-answer questions. Specifically, teacher roles in the knowledge process involve directing, telling, showing, examining, questioning, and evaluating, and student roles include responding to, absorbing, remembering, recognizing, memorizing, and defining information. Athanassiou et al. (2003) expanded on Adams' idea by confirming that teachers can use certain word references in the form of multiple-choice or short-answer questions to produce knowledge via recall. This includes observing students' knowledge of dates, events, places, major ideas, and mastery of subject matter. For example, in the story *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, knowledge could be gathered by asking the following questions:

1. Who was Goldilocks?
2. Where did she live? With whom?
3. What did she do in the forest?

Comprehension is a higher level of cognitive processing that goes beyond recalling information, demonstrating that information has been retained (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou et al., 2003). Comprehension is an explicit understanding of what the information signifies, which is usually demonstrated through paraphrasing, classifying items in groups, and analyzing them with an explanation of principles to others (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou et al., 2003; Bloom, 1956). Specifically, teacher roles in comprehension incorporate a demonstration of listening skills,

questioning, comparing, contrasting, and examining. Student roles include explaining, describing, outlining, restating, translating, demonstrating, and interpreting. An example of comprehension in Goldilocks and the Three Bears can be seen by posing the following questions:

1. This story is about \_\_\_\_\_ (topic).
2. This story tells us \_\_\_\_\_ (main idea).
3. What did Goldilocks look like?

Application is the ability to get learners to use data, principles, theories learned, skills, and techniques in new situations (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou et al., 2003; Bloom, 1956). Teacher roles in application include showing, facilitating, observing, evaluating, organizing and questioning. Student roles include solving problems, demonstrating use of knowledge, calculating, compiling, completing, illustrating, and constructing (Adams, 2015). Application can be demonstrated in Goldilocks and the Three Bears by posing the following questions:

1. How were the bears like real people?
2. Why did Goldilocks go into the little house?
3. Draw a picture of what the bears' house looks like.
4. Draw a map showing Goldilocks' house, the path in the forest, the bears, etc.

Analysis is the distinction between fact and opinion and the identification of claims upon which an argument is built by breaking down material into its constituent parts (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou et al., 2003; Bloom, 1956). Teacher roles in analysis include probing, guiding, observing, evaluating, questioning, organizing, and dissecting. Student roles in analysis include discussing, arguing, debating, examining, testing, calculating, investigating, and inquiring (Adams, 2015). Both teacher and student roles are how organizational structure can be

understood (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou et al., 2003). Analysis can be demonstrated in Goldilocks and the Three Bears by posing the following questions:

1. How did each bear react to what Goldilocks did?
2. How would you react?
3. Compare Goldilocks to any of your friends.
4. Do you know any animal (pets) that acts like humans?

Synthesis recombines the parts created during analysis to create a novel product in a specific situation (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou et al., 2003; Bloom, 1956). Teacher roles in synthesis include facilitating, extending, reflecting, analyzing, and evaluating. Student roles include designing, formulating, planning, taking risks, and creating (Adams, 2015). Synthesis can be demonstrated in Goldilocks and the Three Bears by posing the following questions:

1. List the events of the story in sequence.
2. Can you tell any other stories about little girls or boys who escaped from danger?
3. Make a diorama of the bears' house and the forest.
4. Make a puppet out of one of the characters. Using the puppet, act out his/her part of the story.

Evaluation is judging the value of a class session and materials through reflection, learner feedback and assessment results (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou et al., 2003; Bloom, 1956). Teacher roles involved in evaluation include clarifying, accepting, and guiding. Student roles include judging, disputing, comparing, critiquing, questioning, arguing, assessing, deciding, selecting, and justifying (Adams, 2015). Evaluating can be demonstrated in Goldilocks and the Three Bears by posing the following questions:

1. Why were the bears angry at Goldilocks?

2. Do you think Goldilocks was happy to get home? Explain your answer.
3. Do you think Goldilocks learned anything by going into the bear's house? Explain your answer.
4. Do parents have more experience and background than their children? Give an example from your own history.
5. Why would a grown-up write this story for children to read?

### **Marzano's Nine Instructional Strategies**

Marzano et al. (2011) identified nine effective instructional strategies. The first strategy is Identifying Similarities and Differences, which involves mental processes of important characteristics, classifying elements into groups based on their similarities, creating metaphors by connecting two items by an abstract or non-literal relationship, and creating analogies to show how seemingly nonrelated things relate. This strategy aligns with the analysis level of Bloom's Taxonomy (Flynn et al., 2004). In this strategy teachers can present similarities and differences by giving students a model for practice, using familiar content to teach steps, guiding students as needed, or using graphic organizers. Research shows that identifying similarities and differences also helps build a stronger bond between students and teachers, which increases the motivation to learn (Abdollahimohammad, Jaafar, & Rahim, 2014; Hufton, Elliott, & Illushin, 2003).

Abdollahimohammad et al. (2014) conducted an interesting piece of research on identifying similarities and differences in the nursing industry. In a study done with nursing students with culturally diverse backgrounds, teachers identified similarities and differences in learning and used strategies to bridge those gaps. Teachers helped students connect by asking them to share their stories of how life was back in their countries. The different stories allowed students to identify with the similarities and differences of the other students and the teacher. Students

accepted each other's differences. This acceptance caused a development of trust. As a result, the students were more motivated to learn because they developed a deeper trust for the teacher (Abdollahimohammad et al., 2014). Hufton et al. (2003) supported this notion in more detail, arguing that by identifying similarities and differences and bridging the gaps between the two, students work harder in and out of class. Students like teachers that they can identify with. Also, students study better because they like the person who is teaching them.

The second strategy is Summarizing and Note Taking, which entails synthesizing the most important details about what is being learned and stating it in one's own words (Marzano et al., 2001). This strategy aligns with the synthesis level of Bloom's Taxonomy (Flynn et al., 2004). This category involves substituting some data, deleting some data, and selecting other data to retain, along with an explicit awareness of the information being presented. Teachers could practice summarizing and note taking by giving students teacher-prepared notes and asking students to form their own notes around them. It is generally agreed that summarizing and note taking during class are highly effective in enhancing student achievement (Czarnecki, Rosko, & Fine, 1998; Lee, Lan, Hamman, & Hendricks, 2008; Stefanou, Hoffman, & Vielee, 2008). In a study of sixth graders on the effectiveness of note taking in class, students increased attention to the subject matter and were able to increase cognitive processing through engagement (Czarnecki et al., 1998). In a similar study, students as early as third grade were tested using full and partial note taking strategies in control groups. As a result it was discovered that students as early as age 9 can be trained to complete notes by using writing prompts in strategic and partial forms. This also resulted in higher performance among 9-year-olds (Lee et al., 2008). A study conducted with college students showed that note taking was meaningful and effective during class sessions when college professors instructed using visual aids (Stefanou et al., 2008).

The third category is Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition, which involves teachers acknowledging the attitudes and beliefs of children and connecting them to effort and achievement (Marzano et al., 2001). The acknowledgement of attitudes requires evaluation before giving feedback, and therefore aligns with the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Flynn et al., 2004). Two generalizations are important when discussing reinforcing effort and providing recognition. First, not all students believe in effort and students can change their beliefs, which affects effort. Second, teaching about the reinforcement of effort and tracking it through rubrics, self-assessing, writing, and discussion is effective in determining effort. On the one hand, certain sources conclude that teachers reinforcing effort and providing recognition are effective for students in learning. Buysse and Peisner-Feinberg (2010) noted how giving reinforcement and recognizing students can increase performance because it supports academic learning. On the other hand, at least one source of literature shows that providing reinforcement and recognition can have negative effects. Bartholomew (1993) proposed that recognition could cause embarrassment to students who do not want to stand out. Recognition can be overused and lose its meaning, in addition to, being used as an act of manipulation to control students. Saeverot (2011) also contends that reinforcement and recognition can be used to control students. When used as a control mechanism, there is little to no room given to how students think or feel because the teacher guides everything.

The fourth category is Homework and Practice, which entails extending the opportunity for students to practice, review, and apply knowledge outside of the classroom. Analysis, a higher level of Bloom's Taxonomy, is required for students to think about what part of knowledge is to be provided outside of the classroom at home. Before giving homework, teachers should explain the purpose of each assignment to the student and parent/guardian and

establish homework policies, including consistent schedules. In this process, all homework should receive comments (Flynn et al., 2004). Three authors in particular studies affirm the positive outcomes of giving homework from three different ways. A study by Aksoy and Link (2000) found that homework helped improve 10<sup>th</sup> grade test scores. Betts (1977) did a study on the amount of homework assigned by a teacher and discovered a positive effect of performance on math scores among high school students. Eren and Henderson (2008) also focused on hours of homework assigned and found similar results of increased math scores with 10th grade students. Research shows positive effects of homework yet there are still gaps in understanding the connection between homework and academic performance (Trautwein & Köller 2003).

The fifth category is Nonlinguistic Representations, which recognizes that knowledge is stored in both linguistic and visual forms, thereby necessitating the use of mental images to enhance students' abilities to represent and elaborate on knowledge (Marzano et al., 2001). This strategy aligns with the higher level synthesizing skills of Bloom's Taxonomy (Flynn et al., 2004). Elaborating on knowledge has a strong effect on student achievement. Some practices could include creating graphical, physical, or mental models, and other related activities. Da Silva and Yassuda (2009) contended that creating nonlinguistic representations through the use of mental images is an effective strategy in helping learners retain information. Lewis, Borst, and Kosslyn (2011) argued that through creating mental images, participants are able to perform above the bare minimum of getting problems right.

The sixth category is Cooperative Learning, which calls for organizing students in cooperative groups and giving them the opportunity to interact with one another to enhance learning (Marzano et al., 2001). The synthesis involved and the evaluation to ensure that groups are working together both align with the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Flynn et al.,

2004). In this practice it is beneficial to keep groups small and not overuse group work. Edmunds and Brown (2010) described some interesting benefits to cooperative group learning, asserting that it can enhance the development of discussion skills and thinking, as well as highlight attitudes and reflection of sharing experiences. Gillies (2004) pointed out these benefits in a study done with middle school students who worked in structured and unstructured group learning environments. As a result of this study, those who participated in the structured cooperative group learning environments were more involved with each other than the students who participated in the unstructured learning environment. Those who participated in the structured cooperative group-learning environment were also able to enhance their thinking and discussion skills. Those who did not participate in the structured cooperative group-learning environment did not enhance their thinking and discussion skills as efficiently.

The seventh category is Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback, which offers students constructive criticism for their learning and provides them effective feedback on how well they are progressing in alignment to a learning objective (Marzano et al., 2001). This strategy aligns with the evaluation level of Bloom's Taxonomy (Flynn et al., 2004). Setting objectives and providing feedback can clarify improvements needed for performance. An example of setting objectives would be establishing student contracts that specify certain learning goals. It makes sense that teachers must find the most effective way to provide feedback. Bowman and Laurent (2011) demonstrated that the wrong type of feedback does not work. In a study with high school students in an upper level training course, the authors wanted to test whether using the Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique (IF-AT) is more or less effective than traditional multiple choice exams in improving retention of information taught in class. Although students gave high remarks on the use of the assessment, the IF-AT was not

more effective in testing students than traditional multiple-choice exams. In contrast to this example Zheng, Lawrence, Warschauer, and Lin (2015) described an effective use of feedback. The authors presented a study where two teachers offered feedback to sixth grade students using Google Docs. Students were generally receptive toward using Google Docs for instructional support. The findings suggested that feedback through cloud-based technology could be incorporated in the classroom to support collaborative interactions with each other.

The eighth category is Generating and Testing Hypotheses, which includes enhancing students' abilities by engaging them through making and testing hypotheses. Both inductive reasoning, which is making generalizations based on behavior observed from specific examples, and deductive reasoning, which uses general rules to make a prediction are involved in this process. The analysis and synthesis involved in this process both align with the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Flynn et al., 2004). Research suggests that deductive reasoning is more effective than inductive reasoning. Some exercises in generating and testing hypotheses include problem solving, invention, experimental inquiry, and decision-making. Holland (2007) demonstrated that generating and testing hypotheses in the classroom could help reassure students that possess anxiety about learning. Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, and Kulik (1991) stated that the more frequently students test hypotheses, the more comfortable students will be with the coursework, thereby decreasing anxiety levels.

The ninth category is Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers, which involves helping students retrieve, organize, and use prior knowledge to enhance further learning (Marzano et al., 2001). The analysis involved in this strategy, used to help students grasp knowledge, aligns with the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Flynn et al., 2004). For example, in asking questions,

pausing before answering will increase students' depth of the answers. Graphic organizers are a great way of honing in on teachers' ideas, because it is a pictorial way of organizing ideas.

In addition to Marzano's nine strategies for effectual teaching and learning (Marzano et al., 1991), storytelling is another strategy that is widely known and used in education. Buch and Wolff (2000) described how using open-ended questions is important in acquiring information in storytelling. Viator (2012) offered a perfect example of using open-ended question, discussing a study where middle grade students were asked open-ended questions as a means of increasing their understanding of history. In focusing on Egyptian religion, some of the questions included:

1. Why were the pyramids built?
2. Not all societies believe in an afterlife; why might people begin to believe that life does not end with death?
3. What do you think happened to the land after the harvest, before the farmers plowed it (Viator, 2012)?

Asking the aforementioned questions guided students in telling their stories. As a consequence of asking these questions, students were able to learn more about Egyptian history.

### **Theoretical Case for Storytelling**

**Neuroscience.** Neurologist Paul MacLean (as cited in Kazlev, 2003) introduced the notion that the human brain is composed of three different brains, each of which represents "a distinct evolutionary stratum that has formed upon the older layer before it like an archaeological site" (Kazlev, 2003, p. 1). MacLean likens these three brains to three interconnected biological computers, each with its own specialized intelligence, subjectivity, sense of time and space, and memory. The three brain parts are the reptilian brain, limbic system, and neocortex. Neurons connect all three to each other but they all have their own functions (Kazlev, 2003).

The reptilian brain is the oldest part of the brain, which includes the brain stem and cerebellum. The reptilian brain is located in the lowest part of the brain. It is named after reptiles because in these animals the brain stem and cerebellum dominate. It controls muscles, balance, and instinctive functions, such as breathing, heartbeat, and sexual behavior. The limbic system is the middle part of the brain; this is the mammalian brain, which controls emotions, instincts, and feelings. It will cause humans to fight, flee, or freeze based on the situation. The highest part of the brain is the neocortex. This part of the brain controls higher-level thinking and language skills, among many other things. It is also divided into a right and left side (Kazlev, 2003). The right side controls abstract and artistic ideas, while the left side is more rational and verbal (p.1). Studies show that storytelling is connected to how the brain works because it touches on the emotional part of the brain (Barker & Gower, 2010; Carr & Ann, 2011; Collison & Mackenzie, 1999; Eriauer, 2003; Hansen et al., 2007; Johnson & Taylor, 2006; Morgan & Dennehy, 1997; Murgia & Poggio, 2009).

According to Johnson and Taylor (2006), “The brain is a social organ innately designed to learn through shared experiences” (p. 11). A story serves the purpose of informing and self-esteem and is transferred all across the brain when told (Johnson & Taylor, 2006). These stories that are transferred are processed in the left and right hemisphere of the brain, which connects to the neocortex in neuroscience of Paul MacLean’s triune brain (Kazlev, 2003).

**Freud.** In the article “Strategic Application of Storytelling in Organizations,” Barker and Gower (2010) argued that storytelling is the best way for humans to communicate because stories foster a profound feeling of shared empathy on both a cognitive and emotional level. The reference to cognitive and emotional positions aligns with how the brain works (Kazlev, 2003).

When processing stories, both the conscious and unconscious minds are at work (Carr & Ann, 2011). Freud (1957) argued that the mind is divided into three provinces. The first province is the id, which is where biological urges, drives or instincts are derived. This part of the brain is conscious to the mind. The second province is the ego, which uses logic, memory and judgment to appease the needs of the id. The final part is the superego, which focuses on society's rules and restrictions and reminds the ego of them. The ego and superego are unconscious. When stories are told, certain desires, feelings, and emotions that may arise from the conscious id are held back by the unconscious superego (Carr & Ann, 2011). This activity concerning emotions and feelings align with the limbic system, thus creating synapses that enable retention (Kazlev, 2003).

**Andragogy.** Knowles et al. (2012) used the term andragogy to describe how adults learn, identifying six in-depth key categories in his andragogical model. The first category is the need-to-know, which involves having the peace of mind in knowing that the information being learned can help one's everyday life. The second category is the learner's self-concept, which speaks to adults making their own decisions while learning. The third category is the role of the learner's experiences, which supports the notion that adults learn better when they can juxtapose their personal experiences with what is being learned in the classroom. The fourth category is readiness to learn, which concentrates on the need to learn and catalyzes a readiness for learning. A great example would be learning a skill for a promotion. The fifth category is an orientation to learning, where the learning is a result of problem solving. The final category is the motivation to learn, which includes acquiring knowledge with the hopes of advancement in occupation or salary. These six categories are connected to storytelling, particularly the role of learners' experiences.

The role of learners' experiences is when experience is gained through problem solving and discussion (Knowles et al., 2012). Storytelling is connected to this adult learning (Collison & Mackenzie, 1999; Harris & Barnes, 2006; Morgan & Dennehy, 1997; McLellan, 2006; Paquette, 2013). Regarding this connection to storytelling, the literature indicates that a knowledge transfer takes place when adults participate in sharing stories (McLellan, 2006; Morgan & Dennehy, 1997). Morgan and Dennehy (1997) specifically discussed adults' ability to learn a foreign language in a learning environment through storytelling, while McLellan (2006) noted how Xerox capitalized on the facilitation of learning through encouraging their technicians to share stories during coffee breaks.

Storytelling to motivate is just as important as storytelling to transfer knowledge (Collison & Mackenzie, 1999; Harris & Barnes, 2006; Paquette, 2013). Storytelling in adult learning can help motivate people towards future endeavors when organizations take a new direction. For example, companies use storytelling to help adults learn how to conceptualize new direction and career options (Collison & Mackenzie, 1999). The literature reveals that childhood stories shared by students among each other help motivate by building trust through showing authenticity and self-disclosure (Harris & Barnes, 2006; Paquette, 2013). In addition to facilitating knowledge transfer and motivation, storytelling can also be entertaining. This is important in adult learners' experiences (Knowles et al., 2012).

**Evoking memories.** Triggering memories is connected to learner's experiences in Malcolm Knowles adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2012). When stories are being told schema construction takes place (Artino, 2008). In element interactivity, the learner is dually processing both what is being taught and his/her own expertise based on what story, experiences, or emotions, are being recalled and evoked. These emotions trigger visual memories and

strengthen recall. As a result of this recall, stories allow the listener to see himself/herself in a story and relate to the experience, which is more powerful than offering statistics and numbers alone (Harrison & Barnes, 2006; McLellan, 2006). McLellan (2006) noted how storytelling evokes one's own experiences by *bootstrapping* onto other person's experiences. Those other experiences help people relate to their own experiences, connecting to Malcolm Knowles's concept of role of the learner's experience (Knowles et al., 2012).

Harrison and Barnes (2006) contended that "Most of us carry several virtual volumes of lessons learned from childhood forward- we remember the lessons especially well because we can recreate the story of how we learned them" (p. 350). Leaders use childhood stories to convey certain ideas to others. For example, leaders could tell stories of dealing with conflict in grade school as a way of teaching conflict in the workplace. The lessons learned from stories that participants hear connect them to their own personal life stories, which reinforces the concept of learner's experience (Knowles et al., 2012). Harris and Barnes highlighted the idea of telling a story to employees where workers can recall an incident that has happened. The group recollection of a particular incident lets the audience know that they understand the he culture of the company and their shortcomings, which builds trust.

### **Strategies in Storytelling**

**Cognitive mechanisms.** Swap et al. (2001) listed three cognitive mechanisms that are effective when promoting learning during storytelling. The first one is the availability heuristic, which describes a story that is more readily available from memory. Because the story is more readily available it is more likely to be believed. Vivid stories are more memorable because they can be processed more quickly as opposed to abstract data. The second cognitive mechanism is elaboration, which includes integrating information with what is already known. The clarity and

drama from a story stimulate images that are relatable to personal experience. Elaboration further supports the storyline. The third cognitive mechanism is episodic memory, which involves the recall of events directly experienced and can be recreated. Subsequent research supports the use of these three cognitive mechanisms in different ways in storytelling (C. James & Minnis, 2004; Wijetunge, 2012).

Wijetunge (2012) described cognitive mechanisms as a way of imparting knowledge that is difficult to codify, from one person to another. One way of doing this is by telling stories with a high level of feeling, which can supersede what the teller knows explicitly. In a case study scenario, Swap et al. (2011) explored the transfer of tacit knowledge that occurred when a head librarian told a story to junior executives. The study was motivated by concern that when librarians retire, a high percentage of their tacit knowledge is lost forever. The study allowed a library to gain insights into organizational tacit knowledge. Librarians' tacit knowledge includes information about the culture of the library, logistics, effective and ineffective methods, and awareness of planning and decision-making for the library.

Seven stories are told to junior executives that consisted of assistant librarians, senior assistant librarians, and head senior assistant librarians. These stories consisted of new information integrated with information that the subjects already knew (Swap et al., 2001). Each respondent was evaluated with an interview schedule composed of 12 Likert type statements with five categories of responses varying from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. During the storytelling session, many other nonverbal cues were observed that served to enrich the story. For example, the respondents physically seemed more engaged when the storytelling librarian used facial expressions, inflections in his voice, and body language. These tacit clues could not be recorded, so information like attitude, beliefs, and feelings toward the stories would have been

missed otherwise. This sharing of tacit knowledge via storytelling revealed more than just words (Wijetunge, 2012).

There is a separation between the speakers and the audience in writing. However, oral storytelling connects the speaker with the audience. As a result the speaker is able to share personal tacit knowledge. The data from Swap et al.'s (2001) study confirm that suggested knowledge (tacit) is beneficial to workers. People learn lessons from storytellers that are not explicit. An example would be like a boy taking piano classes from a man of Spanish descent, but learns Spanish by hearing the man talk to his family. This comprehension occurs when stories are told that integrate new information and using nonverbal cues.

**Cognitive processing can be used to transfer knowledge to future leaders.** C. James and Minnis (2004) discussed how cognitive processing could be used to transfer tacit knowledge to train future leaders. Mental models are remembered from organizational history. Mental Models emerge from sharing stories. Unlike explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge in particular can be transmitted more thoroughly through storytelling. C. James and Minnis offered an example of tacit knowledge transfer demonstrated by Xerox employees, who learned how to repair equipment issues from exchanging stories around the *coffee pot* as opposed to using manuals and classes. Another example comes from IBM Global Services and its sales force. IBM realized that each deal was different in size and could take years to negotiate. To improve their technique, they took employees who were involved in sales and recorded them recounting their experiences. The outcome supplied best practices in narrative form.

With regard to training future leaders, two attributes are important in their leadership development. The first is skills learned in the actual context of application. The second is learning from respected people in the firm as opposed to from consultants. Storytelling through

cognitive processing, involves recalling events directly experienced in the past, fulfills both of these requirements (Swap et al., 2001). Listening to stories about how the firm succeeded against a competitor, endured a recession, or introduced a new product from respected figures that experienced these events firsthand encourages emerging leaders and helps them to simplify decisions they will make in the future (C. James & Minnis, 2004).

**Sensory projections: Aesthetic leadership and telling stories connected to feelings.** In the article “Aesthetic leadership,” Hansen et al. (2007) defined the term *aesthetic* in terms of sensory perceptions rooted in emotions. In the telling of stories, the sensory perceptions that are connected to thoughts and feelings inform people’s thoughts on various views. Thoughts being related to feelings are connected to the limbic system, which is one of the key emotional centers of the brain (Kazlev, 2003).

In the article “The Power of Organizational Storytelling: A Management Development Perspective,” Morgan and Dennehy (1997) discussed the effects of hearing or listening to a story, arguing that the story will evoke emotion and a visual image, which makes it more likely to be memorable. The emotional part of the brain this will occur in is the limbic system (Kazlev, 2003).

In the article, “Challenging Hegemonic Masculinities: Men’s Stories on Gender Culture in Organizations,” Murgia and Poggio (2009) argued that men tell stories to show how gender dynamics can cause disparities in gender equality. The article talks about a man’s recollection of injustice regarding the subject of paternity leave. In 2000 in Italy, the law granted men the right to take leave from work because of the birth of a child. The law allowed both parents to take off work even simultaneously for up to 6 months during the first 8 years of the child’s life. The man in the article wanted to take leave after his second daughter was born. He called his HR office to

find out about the procedure and they did not know what to tell him. The employee found this unfair because the mayor had given approval to an acquaintance of his for the same type of leave. The acquaintance also worked in the same public sector of the employee. The telling of this story in the organization ignited the minds of many employees about equality for men in the workplace. Many organizational storytellers use their stories to inspire. Military and business leaders use their stories to inspire others towards taking the right action. Inspiring people touches on the emotions that are located in the limbic system of the brain (Kazlev, 2003).

### **Evidence Related to Storytelling**

**Effective stories.** Harris and Barnes (2006) offered four pertinent steps to building trust by telling effective stories in meetings on which an audience can build based on their own experiences. The first point is to capture everyone's attention with an icebreaker, setting a different tone from the types of meetings about which employees usually complain. The next point is to create a theme that to which employees can relate. Third, the criterion for effectiveness establishes an overarching theme. The criteria can come from a multiple of sources. They can include: having a compelling message, avoiding boastful content, avoiding sarcasm, and communicating with empathy. Fourth, there must be an application for leadership stories. For example, an audience should be able to comprehend how to apply the story to everyday life. In addition to these four steps, the storyteller can make sure the story told was efficient in reaching an audience and emotions and feelings on a certain topic were reinforced.

**Chronotoping through entertainment stories.** Entertainment is a highly prized goal when it comes to telling stories in organizations. Many organizations hold meetings that members perceive as boring. The decorum of these meetings may bring about a trance-like state, which can be avoided by using metaphors and storytelling to entertain; these features increase

the chances of participants staying awake and giving their undivided attention (Carr & Ann, 2011; Corvellec, 2004). Getting employees' attention welcomes a greater acceptance of what is being discussed during the session. While the literature offers the importance of a good plot in entertaining adults through storytelling (Corvellec, 2004), it does not give solid examples of entertaining through storytelling. However, there is a sense of entertaining when storytelling with adults.

Collison and Mackenzie (1997) categorize the telling of stories to entertain as either anecdotal or biographic. Entertainment occurs when stories reinforce feelings and assumptions about a workplace based on a learner's experience. This type of story may emerge when talking about a new project, or something as insignificant as office gossip. The recalling of feelings and assumptions through stories connects to the role of learners' experiences in adult learning theory, as described by Knowles et al. (2012). This connection develops because adults are their authentic selves and they bring their diverse experiences to the classroom. When telling stories in the classroom adults are usually speaking about something they experienced or can relate to. As a result feelings and emotions become involved. Feelings and emotions can also be connected through the telling of childhood stories called chronotoping.

Paquette (2013) connected adult learning to chronotoping, noting how it relates to the articulation of space and time, and is often seen in the telling of childhood stories. Telling childhood stories can encourage audiences to recall authentic motivations that may have emerged while they were growing up. To demonstrate chronotoping, Paquette told the childhood story of how a man moved to Africa as a child with his family. They had a 9-foot fence in their backyard to keep the animals away. There were deadly animals that could easily kill him if he were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The family was told that hippopotamuses were responsible for

more human fatalities in Africa than any other large animal, so they had to be especially careful. The rainforest stood behind the house and black mamba snakes were numerous and well known for their aggression and speed. Once, while wandering around at night, he heard an animal get viciously attacked. At that moment he became increasingly aware of his surroundings and began to take his safety more seriously, for he realized that the victimized animal could easily have been him. Paquette noted how the telling of this story could reignite some childhood memories in the audience. Paquette also described this story as a good example of demonstrating chronotoping to introduce how someone might adjust to safety in a workplace transition. This form of recalling memories is also an important aspect of coaching in telling stories (Carr & Ann, 2011).

Barker and Gower (2010) noted how cross-cultural communication storytelling is important in helping employees on a global platform recall their own experiences in understanding organizations and their future directions by using empathy. The Principles Narrative Paradigm Theory is a storytelling model that is used to exchange values using empathy from a cognitive and emotional standpoint to help participants interpret life experiences. The empathy used in this model comes from telling stories with which participants can identify; the stories feature strong purpose, tone, feedback solicitation, interactivity, and a conclusion that drives the message and inspires. This identification of empathy that adults feel is the connecting factor to Malcolm Knowles role of learner's experiences in adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2012). These connecting factors were revived from being stored in the neo-cortex, limbic system and reptile brain (Kazlev, 2003).

**Stories to improve a skill.** The protégé seeks to identify with stories that the coach tells during a session; this is the path to improving skills (Carr & Ann; 2011). Improving skills

through telling stories that protégés can identify with is the connection to Malcolm Knowles's role of learner's experiences because it causes adults to pull from their own experiences (Knowles et al., 2012).

**Stories can help address tensions.** Storytelling can also help prepare future leaders to address tensions between company objectives and employee needs. C. James and Minnis (2004) described seven story types that future leaders can use to address employees:

1. The rule-breaking story. This happens when a subordinate challenges a high-level manager who is breaking a company rule, such as entering a restricted area without a badge. Is the subordinate commended or reprimanded?
2. Is the boss human? Does the boss temporarily abrogate his high position when presented with the opportunity to equalize status, such as by performing manual labor during peak demand?
3. Can the little person rise to the top? Will a deserving low status employee be rewarded with ascent through hierarchy?
4. Will I get fired? Does the company make it a priority to keep layoffs and firings at a minimum during tough times?
5. Will the company help me when I have to move? Will it seek to alleviate the personal difficulties involved in relocating?
6. How will the boss react to mistakes? Are mistakes forgiven or punished?
7. How will the company deal with obstacles? Will it mobilize to get through crisis, or be overcome by them? (p. 24)

## Measures of Success in Storytelling

**Transformational leadership.** James MacGregor's idea of transformational leadership describes the process where an individual engages others and inspires change through being energetic and enthusiastic and carrying a certain level of passion in trying to help followers reach their fullest potential (Cherry, 2015; Northouse, 2004). The literature suggests that in this process, transformational leaders participate in a dual transfer of knowledge with followers (Cherry, 2015), during where a degree of morale and motivation takes place (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Cherry, 2015).

Bernard M. Bass further reviewed this concept of motivation and morale in transformational leadership, expanding on James MacGregor's idea of transformational leadership by dividing it into four categories. The first category is Intellectual Stimulation. This occurs when leaders encourage followers to be creative by inviting them to do things that introduce new ways of learning. The next category is Individualized Consideration. This includes supporting followers individually through assistance and encouragement for the purpose of building trust and transparency. The third category is Inspirational Motivation. This occurs when leaders share their vision and help inspire the same motivations among their followers. The final category is Idealized Influence. This occurs when the leader serves as a role model in hopes that the follower pattern after the leader in practices (Cherry, 2015; Northouse, 2004).

Storytelling is connected to transformational leadership in five distinct ways (Barker & Gower, 2010; Benjamin, 2006; Collison & Mackenzie 1999; Comstock, 2006; Harris & Barnes, 2006). First, Barker and Gower (2010) discussed transformational leadership and the cross-cultural power of storytelling. Storytelling contributes to business relations and addresses organizational diversity. In doing so, people are transformed into more understanding employees

and stronger relationships are built, which can ultimately increase productivity. This heightened understanding of the organization aligns with inspirational motivation in transformational leadership, because motivation takes place because people are inspired (Barker & Gower, 2010; Cherry, 2015). Barker and Gower also described storytelling as a swift communication channel regardless of diversity. The result of building fast communication channels will foster stronger support and relationships among employees as they grasp the corporate culture and cohesion among other team members. The relationship-building factor connects to the idea of individualized consideration in transformational leadership (Barker & Gower, 2010; Cherry, 2015). Individualized consideration involves support that is provided as a transformation to strengthen relationships (Cherry, 2015).

Second, the connection between transformational leadership and storytelling can be used to analyze case studies. Barbara Benjamin (2006) noted how Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York uses case studies as stories and makes them applicable to leadership concepts. “Every case study includes an action plan and a projection of the student’s potential role in implementing that plan” (p. 162). Organizations use this same idea of case studies to analyze problems. Storytelling through case studies are told in future tense in helping employees understand today’s information technology and globalization society. Case studies challenge past and present behaviors, and encourage employees to look for new visions towards advancing in performance. This idea of looking for new ways of advancements aligns with the intellectual stimulation aspect of transformational leadership (Cherry, 2015).

Third, Collison and Mackenzie (1999) discussed how transformational leadership through storytelling helps people to challenge the status quo because the images that come from stories catalyze new ideas. This concept aligns with intellectual stimulation and the idea of creative

characterization in that a problem in an organization can be converted to a story for clarity and a clearer platform for communication (Cherry, 2015; Collison & Mackenzie, 1999). This process can work with a group of employees, or one individual at a time. Creative characterization falls under transformational leadership because in individualized consideration transformational leaders open up communication for employees so they feel at ease sharing ideas (Cherry, 2015). Benjamin's (2006) article "The Case Study: Storytelling in the Industrial Age and Beyond," also asserted that creating future outcomes through storytelling proves effective in working through problems. This idea of using creativity to transform employees through storytelling aligns with transformational leadership, specifically referencing intellectual stimulation (Cherry, 2015).

Fourth, different types of storytelling are used for transformational outcomes. One category is traditional face-to-face storytelling, which is important in transformational leadership when business needs to be conducted and a level of intimacy is involved. Workforce blogging is another form of storytelling that is important in transforming organizations (Comstock, 2006). Comstock (2006) asserted that "Blogging discourse encourages a merging of identity: a blurring between personal and professional, employee and employer images" (p. 176). Social software is important in general because it promotes a sense of community. Face-to-face storytelling, blogging, and using social software all align with creativity under intellectual stimulation in transformational leadership because of they are non-traditional ways of telling stories. Individualized consideration is also factored in nontraditional storytelling because blogging creates an open platform for communication (Cherry, 2015).

Harris and Barnes (2006) touched on individualized consideration in transformational leadership by discussing the idea of one-on-one coaching in storytelling. The authors noted that when employees need one-on-one feedback or constructive criticism it is best to start off with a

story to help employees relate in a coaching session, because employees are more comfortable with discussing more immediate matters. The positive changes that come from telling a story in the beginning of a coaching session makes the overall experience transformational (Cherry, 2015). Harris and Barnes also connected coaching in storytelling with the inspirational motivation category of transformational leadership by suggesting that managers should share a passionate story with a group that helps them realize they understand what the group is going through. Specifically, idealized influence is discussed as a way of showing humanity and leading from a transparent point of view (Cherry, 2015; Harris & Barnes, 2006). Harris and Barnes stated “There is high value to connection that results when your team members see you as fallible-yet successful” (p. 351). The authors suggested the following idealized influence-informed opening lines when practicing transformational leadership through self-disclosure:

Let me tell you about the time I really screwed up.

I’m going to tell you a story about something I learned the hard way.

I want to tell you how I failed my way to success.

I’d like to tell you heroes about one of my personal heroes. (Harris & Barnes, 2006, p. 352)

Self-disclosure in storytelling creates opportunities for open discussion. Harris and Barnes stated, “Such disclosure, told with humor and confidence, can stimulate dialogue about what could have been done differently and opens a platform for others to share their stories and life lessons” (p. 352). This creative way of igniting discussion aligns with intellectual stimulation in transformational leadership (Cherry, 2015).

**Three step sequence.** According to Kaye and Jacobson (1999), a good story in transformational leadership is built on a three-step sequence. The first step is the actual story;

someone tells it and someone listens to it. The second step is the understanding; the listeners and the storyteller start to understand something that was previously superficial. This second step aligns directly with James MacGregor's original concept of transformational leadership, in that there is dual transfer between leaders and followers that advance them to a higher degree of motivation and morale (Cherry, 2015). Kaye and Jacobson described shared meaning as the final sequence; this occurs when groups utilize shared understanding of one subject to further comprehension of other subjects.

Bass's concept of inspirational motivation served as an expansion of James MacGregor's concept of transformational leadership, in which leaders share their vision and help inspire the motivation among their followers (Cherry, 2015). Sharing visions can be done in the form of telling stories. Kaye and Jacobson (1999) aligned with this concept by stating, "Storytelling can communicate a leader's vision of the future and invoke others' commitment" (p. 46). Stories also build leadership by building through wisdom of the past by creating shared meaning. A study of a 300-member nonprofit company revealed that relating past events helped produce a shared meaning and direction among workers, which also impacted the organization's culture. The organization began to relate to each other's experiences, which made them open to developing a culture together (Kaye and Jacobson, 1999).

**Organizational culture.** Storytelling in transformational leadership plays a major part in organizational culture (Brady & Shar Haley, 2013; Kaye & Jacobson, 1999). Stories create a strong sense of community among diverse people in organizations. This strong sense of community broadens understanding of the organizational culture (Kaye & Jacobson, 1999). Brady and Shar Haley (2013) defined an organization's culture as "a system of shared meaning held by its members that distinguishes their organizations from other organizations" (p. 40).

Storytelling has been a traditional way of passing down wisdom and culture because it anchors an organization's present to its past. Nike has executives whose jobs consist of mostly storytelling. They tell stories about Bill Bowerman (co-founder) pouring rubber into his wife's waffle iron in an innovative way to get closer to creating the perfect footwear. Stories like this one invite innovation within the organizational culture (Brady & Shar Haley, 2013).

Brady and Shar Haley (2013) defined organizational culture in terms of distinct actions that are created between a particular organization and others. Norms and values are shared across generations within organizations. The second action is conveying a sense of identity for organizational members, which can be done through positive stories about people, past memories and situations that employees face and cause people to relate to their own life. The third action is creating a connection to something larger than the individual. "Storytelling communicates competencies and commitments of oneself and others, leading to trust and commitment" (p. 42). The fourth action is influencing employees' attitudes and behaviors, which allows companies to define the workplace culture. Stories go farther than just reading a manual. They are more manageable because they are experience-based knowledge about real life situations. The final action involves augmenting the stability of an organization's social system. Organizations are composed of practices and mental frames. Storytelling can help unlearn some of the more ancient ways of doing things in order to survive as an organization in an evolving world.

The Ford motor company offers a prime example of stories being told for the survival of a company. Henry Ford, the pioneer who created the industry and family dynasty, realized that the culture of the company had to change in order to survive because he was almost bankrupt. Henry Ford's great grandson, William Ford Jr., was not able to properly address the entrenched careerist culture that resisted putting advancement ahead of corporate success. William Ford

understood how bad things had gotten, so he willingly stepped aside and let Alan Mulally become CEO. Mulally realized that his options were to either change the culture of Ford or take a bailout from Washington. Mulally chose to change the culture of Ford; using the help of William Ford's board influence, he unified Ford's operations, transformed its product lineup, and succeeded in improving the culture. By changing the culture, Mulally created a shared vision of what Ford was and could be again. He personally made sure the employees adhered to the process of that vision by working together as a whole. As a result, Alan Mulally reformed Ford's story and changed its culture by managing the crisis that was at hand (Brady & Shar Haley, 2013).

**Crisis management.** In addition to storytelling playing a major role in organizational culture, transformational leadership occurs in the area of crisis management (Kopp, Nikolovska, Desiderio, & Gateman, 2011; F. Smith & Kenton, 2001; Russo, Vernam, & Wolbert, 2006). Storytelling can be used within an organization by managing discord by coming up with plan to overcome problems (Kopp et al., 2011). Storytelling should be a part of any organization's crisis management program because of the concerns that emerge when dealing with a crisis. Kopp et al. (2011) stated that an organizational crisis could be seen as inherently narrative. Because of this observation, storytelling can be anecdotal. The telling of a story builds a plot around a disruption. Recognizing storytelling as a crisis-management tool, then-Senator Richard Nixon's "Checkers" speech helped when facing the disruptive occurrence of a political crisis that could have cost him the vice-presidential nomination on the Eisenhower ticket. Nixon's narrative has symbols that constructed a narrative image of him as a moral model that personified the American Dream. It also showed him as a patriot. Nixon suggested that he would be a hardworking president based on his humble beginnings. At the beginning of his speech he talked

about how he came from a hard working family. His early years were spent laboring at a grocery store in a family enterprise, which propelled him to work his way through college. He then mentioned how his wife did not have a fur coat, but instead, a respectable republican cloth coat. This suggested that his political goals were not about financial gain. In closing one of his speeches he mentions how a man donated a white spotted cocker spaniel dog and that they would keep it no matter what people say about him keeping it. This suggests that as president he would stand up for what he believes in even if it does not make him the most popular. Nixon was able to construct a positive psychological response to crisis in his speech through demonstrating the power of storytelling. He used ethos and a rhetorical technique that was filled with effective symbolism and imagery (Kopp et al., 2011).

Human resource departments dealing with crisis issues can use similar crisis management tactics as Nixon's speech. Human resource departments can use storytelling as a toolkit for building human capital in a tripartite framework. The first part of this three-part framework is pre-crisis. Storytelling can be used as a prevention and preparation method. Crisis response is the second category of the tripartite framework; during this stage, storytelling encompasses the actual or the present state of the crisis during which management responds. The final aspect of this model is the post crisis, which occurs when storytelling happens during the follow-up period after a crisis. This type of storytelling consists of ways to deal with the crisis, providing appropriate information needed to prepare for the next crisis. Sometimes storytelling is appropriate when the crisis calls for an assertion of authority (Kopp et al., 2011).

**Asserting authority.** A study by F. Smith and Keyton (2001) explored how producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason used storytelling on an episode of *Designing Women* to tell her

side of the story of her understanding of the organization's belief system, and to affirm her authority over actress Delta Burke.

Bloodworth-Thomason wrote this episode when there were underlining conflicts between Delta Burke and her. Delta Burke declined to act out a scene in a mud bath for this last episode of the season. Bloodworth used the script to serve as a metaphor for the problems she had with Burke and exercised her control over the script to speak out (F. Smith & Keyton, 2001). F. Smith and Keyton (2001) summarized the storyline for this particular episode, "La Place Sans Souci," with the following description;

Suzanne offers to use her income tax refund to treat everyone to a weekend at a health spa and resort. At the spa, the women are separated into two groups: those who need to gain a few pounds, Julia and Mary Jo, and those who need to lose a few pounds, Charlene and Suzanne (Delta Burke). Tension builds quickly in the story as feeding and pampering begins for two and exercising and dieting ensues for the other two women. By the end of the episode, resentment erupts into a fight in a mud bath, and the four women are ejected out of the spa. (p. 160)

Delta Burke eventually decided to do the scene. However, the episode seemed to foreshadow the demise of the television show *Designing Women*. In this example, storytelling was used to assert authority, but it can also be used to understand worldviews.

**Understanding worldviews.** Russo et al. (2006) discussed how counselors utilize sandplay within the framework of social constructivism to help understand their clients' worldviews. Social constructivism involves a mutual understanding between counselor and client. Storytelling through sandplay allows the client to reach a sense of wholeness with the counselor's help. It is often used as a more therapeutic approach, as it aids in healing and to

encourage the patient to talk. To support the notion of how counselors use storytelling and sandplay as a way of understanding the client's worldview, Russo et al. offered the following example of a 5-year-old child in counseling whose parents were involved in a custody hearing. Because of this situation, the child had behavior problems. The counselor used sandplay storytelling to get a better understanding of the child's preoperational and fantastical perspective on life. The counselor was able to see that the child's issues stemmed from negative feelings toward problems in the home. The counselor could also use social constructivism to understand the client's deconstruction and reconstruction of themes in order to help achieve a functional perspective. The counselor was about to persuade the client to open up about his or her views on things to be helped.

**Persuasion.** Storytelling in transformational leadership could be used to influence others through persuasion (Kaye & Jacobson, 1999; Pulizzi, 2012; R. Smith, Pedersen, & Burnett, 2014). Kaye and Jacobson (1999) stated that stories could be used to persuade through influencing individuals towards future possibilities. Before these types of stories are told, storytellers usually set objectives, develop a vision, decide how they can relate it to others, and take steps to carry out their goals.

R. Smith et al. (2014) addressed the telling of stories in transformational leadership to persuade certain outcomes on police reports. Part of the work of law enforcement includes telling stories about cases and recounting events that occurred. Stories in policing literature have been used in police stations, criminal trial courts, organizational dramas, police humor, police as street-corner politicians, probationer training, police culture, police investigations, violence and politics, and police leadership. R. Smith et al. stated that law enforcement stories could be divided into two categories: organizational and personal. In both categories, gender preference

storytelling arises. Proficient police storytellers are usually men, while female officers find it difficult to cast themselves because of the masculine environment. Most stories are about control and are about men.

When it comes to writing reports, officers usually stick to a traditional script that is suitable to the courts. However, new police officers do not learn officially how to write this script when they join the police force. Rather, they learn to do so from the tacit knowledge of reading other reports that are deemed acceptable. This legal script could be slightly different from the 100% truth (R. Smith et al., 2014). For example:

There was an officer in an unmarked car that was tired and drove to lay-by on the edge of town to have a sleep. He slept past his shift and, upon awakening, found that a local criminal was parked next to him. On investigating the car, he found the criminal in possession of stolen property and arrested him. The resultant report and commendation did not mention serendipity or sleeping and read like a scripted police report should. (R. Smith et al., 2014, p. 230)

To continue writing reports, officers not only have to be familiar with the language but also have to learn laws, statutes, ordinances, regulations, and by-laws verbatim and learn how to reword these in acceptable legal frameworks as evidence. This type of persuasion through storytelling can be used to get customers to look at a certain brand.

**Content marketing.** Pulizzi (2012) described content marketing to persuade in terms of storytelling. Content marketing uses storytelling as a way of attracting and retaining customers. In this process, storytelling is used in many forms to create “valuable, relevant, and compelling content by the brand itself on a consistent basis” (p.116). Corporate magazines, newsletters, blog posts, videos, webinars, podcasts, and media sites all use content marketing. In corporate there

were three barriers to content marketing that no longer exist. The first is content acceptance. Today, brands like the *Wall Street Journal* does not have to approve content for it to become accepted. The second barrier was talent. In the past, journalists did not like working for non-media brands because it deviated from their profession. In today's society, writers, editors, and journalists exist in every industry to help produce great stories. The final barrier was technology. There were limitations of who was able to publish on the Internet. Today anyone or any organization can publish content. Although these barriers are gone the biggest challenge today is for companies to produce consistent content that engages customers and prospects.

Storytelling in a group setting is effective in transforming people's lives (Abma, 2003; Escalfoni, Braganholo, & Borges, 2011; Fuertes, 2012; Kolb, 2003; Sax, 2006). Kolb (2003) discussed using storytelling in a group setting to manage organizational continuity. Kolb reviewed a case study where a consultant worked with Amcor and was tasked with helping employees get accustomed to workflow and safety changes. He also had to get them to support operational improvements. The employees were resistant. The consultant and his assistant set up a mandatory 2-day training for the 100+ staff members. The first day involved team activities, and he had all members sit together in a circle. He would then ask the person who had been there the longest to come sit next to him. He began asking that person questions, such as when they first began working there, what they recalled about the first day on the job, and what things were like then. He would then ask the second longest working employee to move next to him, asking the same questions. The stories connected the older workers with the younger ones. The consultant witnessed the employees telling a group story for continuity, and doing so helped link different generations. There was no anxiety or apprehension with this form of group storytelling. It became easier for the employees to adopt the new changes after this exercise.

Abma (2003) described how storytelling workshops create value and meaning as an organizational learning intervention. Storytelling workshops foster organizational learning for key reasons. The first reason is to “enable participants to exchange stories and to talk genuinely about their experiences, concerns and the dilemmas they face” (p. 235). This builds a sense of connection and allows multiple points to be viewed and negotiated, which leads to the second reason: to enable participants to discuss taboo subjects. It also helps in bringing issues to public attention. The third reason is “time for reflection and inquiry is a luxury and ill-afforded in the context of certain organizations; there is pressure to perform” (p. 236). The fourth reason is “asking questions is a fundamental characteristic of organizations that learn” (p. 236).

Storytelling helps participants to raise questions and doubts publicly. This culture of acting on curiosities is not common in organizations. The fifth reason is that “commonly people are finding their actions so self-evident that they take them for granted” (p. 236). Beliefs and assumptions are reviewed in storytelling workshops. The sixth reason is “if a canonized story no longer proves to be an appropriate guide for action, there is a need to develop new plot lines.

Sometimes stories become dated and the same story will not work for new challenges.

Storytelling workshops allow participants to exchange ideas through coming up with new stories that can be brought back to own departments, workplace, etc. The final reason is “multiplicity is a necessary condition for organizational learning. Often times other external voices get left out. These voices, for example, could include clients. Storytelling workshops bring in other points of view to heighten multiplicity

Escalfoni et al. (2000) noted how group storytelling allows people to recall portions of the past and describe them in their own words. People are respondent to collective knowledge of

a reported event in-group storytelling. The story is a result of several people contributing their own perspective to the collective story, which could be synchronous or not.

Fuertes (2012) described group storytelling as a way of helping internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mindanao, Philippines, in their attempt to make sense of their experience of war and displacement. Three types of people were affected by the wars: indigenous people, Muslims, and Christian migrant settlers from central and northern Philippines. These people were affected by three major wars: the 1970-1976 Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) rebellion and the 2000 and 2003 government offenses. Participants that were affected by these wars were put in a room and told stories that affected their collective identity as belonging to the same ethnic or religious community in relation to other groups. Transformations happened as a result because participants were able “to minimize their destructive effects of displacement and maximize their personal and social growth as individual human beings (p. 345).

Sax (2006) stated that telling group stories has a sensuality that connects it to the actual experience. People can organize and process their experiences during group storytelling, as these stories evoke “sights, smells, and sounds, while philosophies and precepts usually do not” (p. 167).

Aesthetic leadership plays a major part in transformational storytelling (Harris & Barnes, 2006; Taylor, Fisher, & Dufresne, 2002). Harris and Barnes (2006) defined aesthetics as meanings constructed based on feelings about experiences via senses, as opposed to meanings deduced in the absence of experience, such as mathematics or other realist ways of knowing. The Greek work *aisthesis* means any kind of sensory experience regardless of whether it has to do with senses or art. Harris and Barnes (2006) suggested that transformational leadership is connected to change efforts and organizational visions that are inspirational, motivational, and

empowering to followers. Visions of a better future are a common factor in transformational leadership. Stories are an efficient way to convey visions because they encourage more meaningful work and deeper purpose. This aligns with inspirational motivation in transformational leadership (Cherry, 2015). Because visions are about the future, which involves a leap of faith, followers cannot always inspire with stories that are rational, objective, and empirical (Harris & Barnes, 2006). Stories have to be told using aesthetic reflection as opposed to analysis of accuracy. Harris and Barnes stated:

This communication of idealized content involves a challenge for leaders to somehow make visions real and bring them into the present, to give followers at least a sense of what it is like to live in the vision so that feelings and emotions might inspire enactment of the vision. (p. 550)

Finding creative ways of inspiring this vision aligns with the intellectual stimulation of transformational leadership (Cherry, 2015).

Fisher and Dufresne (2002) argued that an aesthetic perspective on storytelling contributes to an understanding of how and why some stories are more effective than others. A good story involves a strong aesthetic experience that involves meaning, enjoyment, and a feeling of connectedness. In contrast, a bad story provides little-to-no aesthetic experience and leaves the audience to make sense of the story without guidance. Leaders in education use storytelling to bring about this same aesthetic feeling.

**Storytelling in leadership in K-12 education.** There is a consensus among authors that in education, storytelling in leadership is defined as a narrative told by a leader at school to an audience for the purpose of transforming one or more elements of the school or organization (Noonan & Fish, 2006; Sanders 1995). This definition can be seen in Marc Kuly's (2011)

example of changing his students' mindset through storytelling. Kuly was mandated to teach a class about living standards around the world to a group of diverse students. He decided to use storytelling to transform the mindsets of his students to being more open in defining standards of living. The curriculum he was given was not written for diverse students, so he decided to start by sharing his own stories of growing up and playtime to help students relate to each other. As a result of Kuly's intervention, the students began to ask questions, and their conversations about standards of living were transformed. There was a transfer of knowledge that helped the students to understand that standards of living were not solely subject to their own individual experiences.

As seen in Marc Kuly's example, students are able to learn from drawing on their own experiences when hearing stories (F. Collins, 1999; Hunter & Eder, 2010). F. Collins (1999) argued that the mental images that students form when hearing stories are a result of the activity of the mind where a strong case is presented for educational value on imagination. As a result of developing these experiences, students develop their own personal morphologies and gain more clarity with the subject matter by hearing more and more stories, retelling them, and creating their own. However, Hunter and Eder (2010) argued that because students draw from their own experience, they are maintaining their own expertise, which reinforces that their contribution is important and should be considered in the conversation.

It has been suggested that teachers who use stories are more effective at transferring knowledge in childhood and higher education than teachers who do not (R. Collins & Cooper, 1997; Mittelstadt, 2003). Telling stories of affirmations, teacher tales, and gifts cultivates increased attention spans, imaginative writing, good group dynamics, and enhanced self-esteem among elementary school students (Mittelstadt 2003; Rockman, 2001). Stories also can support an elementary school curriculum. A story can bring a curriculum to life by connecting to the

learner's immediate situation (Hamer, 1999). This connection is also prevalent in discussions about adult learning in education.

Recent evidence suggests that teachers are effective with telling stories with adults because it allows them to connect with their own stories (Knowles et al., 2012). Unfortunately the literature had little evidence on the effectiveness of storytelling with nontraditional adults in education and the experiences of adult educators. However, the research does attest to the overall effectiveness of storytelling with adult learners.

**Digital storytelling.** Digital storytelling utilizes computer-based tools to tell stories that involve multimedia like graphics, audio, video, and web publishing to craft the imagination and the elevated experience of both teachers and students (Digital Storytelling, n.d.; Sadik, 2008). Teachers who use digital storytelling with their students can present material in interesting ways. For example, teachers could use graphics and visual text to tell stories. Teachers also use digital storytelling to teach lessons within a larger unit, as well as make abstract materials more conceptual (Digital Storytelling, n.d.).

Students also benefit creating digital storytelling in unique ways (Digital Storytelling, n.d.; Sadik, 2008). Students who create digital storytelling enjoy putting together their ideas through titles, audio, narrations, motions, and transitions, thereby participating in four student-centered learning activities: student engagement, reflection for deep learning, project-based learning, and effective integration of technology into instruction. Students also are practicing four literacy initiatives. The first category is digital literacy, which is the ability to gather information, and discuss issues with an expanding community. The second category is global literacy, which is using a global perspective to read, analyze, interpret and respond to information. The third category is visual literacy, which has to do with understanding, producing,

and communicating through visual images. The fourth category is technical literacy, which is the process of improving learning, performance, and productivity through computers and other forms of technology. The final technology is information technology, which is the ability to search for and synthesize information (Digital Storytelling, n.d.).

### **Chapter 3: Research Design And Methodology**

The participants of the Excellence and Innovation Project, in conjunction and with approval of their committee members wrote their first three chapters in past tense, including Chapter 3. Although the chapter was written in the past tense, the doctoral candidates understand that they are not to conduct their research until IRB approval is attained. Certain educational leaders use storytelling as an effective teaching strategy. The specific process of using storytelling in the classroom can be gathered and reviewed for future storytelling educational leaders. The practices of high achieving storytellers in education can be captured through qualitative design using a phenomenological approach.

This chapter will provide an overview of the exploration of best practices of storytelling leaders in education, including the study design, participants, data sources, protection of the human subjects, and data collection. The chapter also discusses the techniques used in interviewing, instrument, and validity and reliability. A personal connection to the subject matter will be discussed in the Statement of Bias. Detailed procedures for the study's data are included under Data Analysis.

#### **Restatement of Research Questions**

This study was grounded in phenomenology and focused on discovering the following:

1. What strategies and practices do leaders in education who use storytelling employ?
2. What challenges do leaders in education who use storytelling in their leadership practice face?
3. How do leaders who use storytelling as a leadership practice measure their success?
4. What recommendations do leaders in education offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool?

## Nature of Study

This study used a qualitative research design in order to determine the best practices of the storytelling participants in this study. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative design is appropriate when there is a complex problem or issue that needs to be explored or understood. The issue this study was explored was storytelling practices as an effective strategy. Qualitative research has to do with “studying things in their natural setting” and “attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Creswell described the following characteristics associated with qualitative design:

1. **Natural Setting:** Researchers talk to participants directly in a face-to-face setting. This is very important in storytelling because of the body language involved. When interviewing participants, the principal investigator can observe body language, which can add to the interpretation of the interview.
2. **Researcher as a Key Instrument:** The researcher collects data through interviewing participants, observing behavior, and examining documents. The researcher can design and use an actual instrument, offering open-ended questions. The principal investigator in this study asked questions and observed behaviors of teachers during an interview.
3. **Multiple Methods:** Researchers gather more than one form of data, such as interviews, documents, and observations. The principal investigator collected information through a recorded interview. He also documented the emotions and inflections that participants expressed.
4. **Complex Reasoning Through Inductive And Deductive Logic:** Researchers take a *bottom up* inductive approach to building patterns, themes and categories.

- Inductively, the research works back and forth through themes and the database forming a solid set of comprehensive themes. The researcher also uses a *top down* deductive approach to complex reasoning. Deductively, the researcher builds themes that are checked against the data. The principal investigator in this study built on themes collected through interviews to interpret the collected data.
5. **Participants' Meanings:** The researcher focus on the meanings the participants are conveying, thereby excluding his/her own personal meaning from the research. Because participant views reflect multiple meanings, the researcher looks for themes in a qualitative report. In this study, the principal investigator had all interviews transcribed and found meaning through them by grouping themes.
  6. **Emergent Design:** The researcher understands that there could be a change in questions, forms of data, and possibly individual studies and sites. The principal investigator in this story was aware of these changes that can affect how the interviews could proceed with the storytelling participants.
  7. **Reflexivity:** The researcher indicates his/her background and how it could possibly relate to the interpretation of the study. Personal gains are also brought to light. The principal investigator in this story revealed his personal connections and reasons for conducting the study.
  8. **Holistic Account:** The researcher ultimately wants to present a complex picture of the problem. This process involves looking at perspectives, identifying multiple perspectives, and exploring the big picture. The principal investigator in this study considered all elements involved in this study to ensure that the outcome was optimally accurate.

## **Methodology**

A methodology rests on a problem that will be investigated (Roberts, 2004). The problem is in this study is that teachers need to practice effective teaching strategies in the classroom. Methodology also involves a purpose. The purpose in this study is to discover best practices of storytelling leaders in education. Methodology also has a theory base and nature of data. The theoretical base of this study is phenomenological and it is based on a qualitative approach.

Certain individuals have evolved into storytelling leaders in education. The objective of the study was to capture shared experiences and the evolution process that led to the success of effective storytellers. This study is grounded in phenomenology, which uses several individuals to describe the common aspects of their lived experiences during a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This study asked teachers to discuss their lived experiences in storytelling in the classroom. Moustakas (1994) contended that phenomenology is about finding the essence of meanings in the human experience.

Between Moustakas and Van Manen (1990), there are certain key features that make up phenomenology. The first feature is an emphasis on a particular phenomenon. This study focused on storytelling. This topic can be classified as an educational idea, because best practices of storytelling was viewed as an effective teaching strategy. The second feature is the exploration of the phenomenon with a group of individuals. Leaders in education were identified in this study. More specifically these leaders consisted of teachers who use storytelling in the classroom. The third feature is a philosophical discussion about the basic ideas involved in the conducting the phenomenology, which involves a close look at the lived experiences of the group of individuals. Conversations were conducted with teachers about their experiences of storytelling in the classroom. The fourth feature involves the discussion of personal experiences with the

phenomenon. Doing so may not completely remove bias from the study but it does demonstrate personal experiences with the subject matter. The fifth feature is data collection, which involves interviewing the participants. The interview process can take place using a variety of means such as forms, documents, poems, etc. In this study, each teacher was interviewed about storytelling. The sixth step is data analysis, which entails going from narrow descriptions to broader ones. In this study, data was collected from each teacher interview and analysis yielded several general themes. In the final feature a descriptive passage is documented showing the essence of the experience, what the participants experienced, and how they experienced it, which this researcher did after interpreting the data.

Phenomenology can be seen from a human science orientation perspective in hermeneutical phenomenology. Hermeneutical phenomenology involves a dynamic interplay of certain activities: a concern of interest, reflection of certain themes that make up a lived experience surrounding that interest, describing the phenomenon maintaining a strong relation to the topic, balancing the parts of the writing as a whole, and making interpretations by thinking about different meanings of the lived experience (Van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenology can also be seen from a psychological perspective, in the case of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) defined transcendental phenomenology as the process by which “everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (p. 34). The procedures in transcendental phenomenology involve identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one’s experiences, collecting data from several people who have experienced the same phenomenon, analyzing the information to reducing it to significant quotes and statements, combining the statements into themes, and developing a textual description (what the participants experienced) and a structural description (how they experienced it in terms

conditions, situations, or context; Creswell, 2013). For the purposes of this study, transcendental phenomenology was practiced.

## **Research Design**

**Participant selection.** The researcher has had 15 years of experience in and involvement with the education and entertainment communities. During this period, given the interest in storytelling as a leadership tool, various acquaintances were made in these two industries. The names were compiled of prominent educational leaders who are noted for their ability to incorporate storytelling in their leadership journey. The process of participant selection began with this list and followed this procedure:

1. Statement of criteria for inclusion/exclusion:
  - a. Criteria for inclusion in the study were:
    - i. The potential participant must have been noted in a public forum and have received accolades for exemplary application of storytelling in his/her leadership journey.
    - ii. Public contact information was available for the potential candidate.
    - iii. The potential participant must have been a teacher in K-12 or higher education.
    - iv. The participant must have been between the ages of 30 and 90.
  - b. Criteria for exclusion in the study were:
    - i. The potential participant was not in a public forum and has not received public accolade for his/her storytelling leadership journey.
    - ii. No public contact information was available for the potential candidate.
    - iii. The potential participant was not a teacher in K-12 or higher education.

- iv. The participant was not between the ages of 30 and 90.
2. Application of criteria for inclusion/exclusion to the list of participants to narrow the list down to eligible participants:
  - a. For every member of the list, a comprehensive Internet search was conducted to determine if there were noted references, recognitions, or accolades associated with the potential participant.
  - b. If the potential candidate was noted for his/her work in storytelling, then publicly available contact information was researched for the potential participant.
  - c. The school website was utilized to verify that the possible participant was indeed a teacher at a K-12 or higher education institution.
  - d. Participants were asked whether they were between the ages of 30 and 90.
3. Statement of criteria for maximum variation:
  - a. To ensure a broad perspective of views among the candidates, the list of eligible candidates was further narrowed down by ensuring that the mix of participants included:
    - i. Representation of both genders.
    - ii. Representation of different life experiences.
    - iii. Representation of varied ethnicity.
    - iv. Representation of varied work experiences.
  - b. Using this strategy, the list of eligible candidates was narrowed down to the list of final study participants. This list consisted of all participants who met the study's criteria for inclusion/exclusion, maximum variation, and publicly available contact information.

4. Snowball sampling:

- a. If the list of final study participants contained fewer than 20 people, or if after contacting the potential participants, fewer than 15 agreed to participate, then at the end of each interview of a participant, the interviewee was asked to identify any other noted figure that would be eligible to participate in the study.
- b. Additional names identified in the process were subject to steps 1 through 4, as stated here.

In looking at sample size, it is important to carefully consider the individual subjects and the number of people that need to be interviewed (Creswell, 2015). In phenomenology the number sample size can be as small as one (Dukes, 1984). For example, the study can be about the experiences of one person. The sample size can go up to as large as 324 (Polkinghorne, 1989). For example, the study can involve a large social media population. For the purposes of this study, the sample was made up of 20 individuals, targeting a response rate of 15.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with closely related follow-up questions and questions of clarity. Creswell (2013) offered nine steps that should be followed when going through the interview process. The first step is to decide on the research questions. Open-ended questions were formulated that highlighted the phenomenon of the study. The second step is to identify interviewees. Creswell encourages that these participants be best equipped to answer questions based on purposeful sampling procedures. The third step is to determine what type of interview will gather the most information for the study. The following were acceptable interview formats: phone interviews, face-to-face interviews, Skype, and focus groups. The fourth step is to use adequate recording procedures when conducting the interview. Creswell suggested using recording equipment that produces good acoustics. The fifth step is to design

and use the appropriate interview protocol. This stage consists of coming up with a form to use when interviewing, as well as open-ended interview questions. The sixth step is to refine the interview questions and procedures through further testing. Yin (2009) suggested refining interview questions for the purpose of increasing relevance. The seventh step is to determine the place for conducting the interview. Creswell stated that the interviewer should find a place that is free from distractions and good enough for audiotaping. The eighth step is obtaining a consent form after arriving at the interview site. It is important to have the interviewee complete a consent form for IRB purposes. The ninth step is to use good interview procedures, such as listening carefully and completing the interview within the time specified.

A list of experts who met the inclusion criteria was compiled through personal contacts. The contacts come from a range of resources. The researcher has been a substitute teacher for the Los Angeles Unified School District for 8 years, during which time he formed a network with a large number of teachers, many of whom use storytelling in their classrooms. In addition, he has been a member of West Angeles Church of God in Christ for 10 years. The church, located on Los Angeles, CA, has over 30,000 members. During this time he has developed a network of educators who also have a background in acting and are known for incorporating stories in the classroom. Teaching at two major higher education institutions in Los Angeles, CA, has afforded him the opportunity to develop a rapport with fellow educators. He has also attended many instructional strategy educational conferences where he met educators with unique storytelling techniques. The researcher is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated. In this African American Greek letter organization he met a network of educators. Additionally, he has a background in television acting, where he has met a number of actors who also teach in the education system.

**Protection of human subjects.** Because this research involved human subjects, guidelines had to be followed in order to protect them. Human subjects are protected under the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) monitor this process, and every entity conducting research has one. Pepperdine University falls under the Graduate and Professional Schools IRB, whose main goal is to protect the welfare and dignity of human subjects. Appropriate forms were submitted and had all modifications completed by the IRB Fall 2015 deadline. An approved IRB recruitment script was used when contacting human subjects.

**Data collection.** The sample size for this study was 20, with an anticipated response rate of 15. An initial email was sent out to participants' professional emails during working hours asking them if they would like to participate in a study on storytellers in education. All prospects who responded received an explanatory email which detailed the study and its general requirements for participation. Once participants responded to the introductory email, another more detailed email was sent with dates, IRB consent forms, information about the questions to be that were asked, and the interview process that took place at Pepperdine University's West Los Angeles location. One week after sending this email, each participant was called to verbally review the process. The following aspects of participation were discussed over the phone: comprehensive explanation of the research, consent, voluntary participation, expected duration of the participation, description of risks, confidentiality, anonymity, remuneration, conflicts of interest, copyright, and contact information for questions. Anonymity could not be granted due to a personal affiliation to each subject. However, participants received written documentation assuring them that all information given would be stored confidentially in a password protected Gmail account. The interviewer reviewed the risks that could be involved in doing the study. For

example, electronic devices could be hacked and confidential information could be compromised. Human subjects were also informed of the benefits of participating. For example, participants could be a part of an important study that could ultimately get published. It was explained that they would receive a Starbucks gift card of \$6 for participating. Finally, participants would then be asked if they understood the instructions and if they had any questions. After the phone call, a follow-up email was sent to all human subjects with documentation stating that they had the liberty to withdraw at any time.

If a human subject agreed to participate but later failed to do so, the interviewer first sent a follow-up email. Next, a call was placed to the respondent. If there was no response, a second email was sent. If there was still no response, a final call was made to the participant. If contact is still not made, the respondent was taken off the list of expected human subjects for the study.

On the day of the interview, steps were taken to ensure that the meeting place was secured. In addition, audio recording equipment was tested to make sure it would function properly. The recording feature on a cell phone was used to capture the interview. When the human subject arrived, their comfort was ensured prior to starting the interview. Once the human subject confirmed that he/she was comfortable, the informed consent form was reviewed and the interview began. After the interview, each human subject was given a \$6 Starbucks gift card.

### **Interview Protocol**

**Techniques.** In conducting interviews it is important for certain techniques for success to be considered. Specifically, Creswell (2013) described three ingredients for a great interview: icebreakers, handling emotional outbursts, and saying very little. The researcher for this study is a Leadership Training Consultant and has a long history of acting. In leadership, he has coached

many individuals and organizations, beginning with icebreakers. The plan is to begin each interview with a fun icebreaker to build trust and engage the human subject in dialogue.

As a trainer in the business and education arena, clients have frequently experienced emotional outbursts with the researcher. Years of experience have resulted in the ability to handle emotional moments compassionately. In the interviews for this study, each human subject was reassured with empathic words and appropriate body language in the event of an emotional outburst.

As an actor the researcher has taken many improvisational theater classes where he had to learn to listen patiently while the other person is speaking. As a leadership trainer, he strategically allows clients' conversations to be their self-discovery teaching tool. Sometimes his clients simply need to work through issues by talking through them. The skills accumulated in the acting and leadership industries have provided him with the ability to practice the art of being silent during the interviews. Creswell (2013) offered four major steps to interviewing to be considered when talking to the human subjects:

1. Use a header to record essential information about the project and as a reminder to go over the purpose of the study with the interviewee.
2. Place space between the questions in the protocol form.
3. Memorize questions and their order to minimize losing eye contact with the participant.
4. Write out the closing comments that thank the individual for the interview and request follow-up information, if needed from him or her. (p.169)

**Instrument.** The following 11 question protocol were used for data collection:

1. What role does storytelling play in your leadership practice?

2. How do incorporate storytelling in your leadership practice?
3. As an educational leader, what inspires your stories?
4. What are the main sources of the stories you use to support your leadership practice?
5. What elements need to be in place in the classroom for storytelling to be effective?
6. Is there a downside in using stories in your leadership practice?
7. As a storyteller what are your most significant challenges?
8. How do you assess the extent to which storytelling enhances your leadership practice?
9. How do you become aware your stories aren't resonating with your audience?
10. What do you do when your audience reacts negativity to a story tell your tell?
11. Knowing what you know now about effective storytelling, what advice would you share with new storytellers?

The original set of questions was designed based on the aforementioned interview protocol. Careful attention was given to design the protocol questions so that they would be collectively exhaustive and mutually exclusive. Recordings from each interview were transcribed into a paper copy.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Validity of the instrument was established to ensure that the questions on the protocol adequately addressed the constructs in the research questions. To facilitate this process, a four-step validation process was utilized (Creswell, 2013).

**Step 1: Prima facie validity.** First, the appropriate interview questions were designed in order to generate the best responses. The interview questions were matched with the research questions.

**Step 2: Peer review validity.** It was important for the relationship between the research questions and the interview questions to be visually shown. A table was constructed that showed the relationship between each research question and the corresponding interview questions (Table 1).

Table 1

*Research and Interview Questions: Validation Table*

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1:	
RQ1:	
RQ1:	
RQ1:	

Table 2 was then peer reviewed by a preliminary panel of reviewers consisting of three researchers who are currently doctoral students in the Educational Doctorate in Organizational Leadership (EDOL) program at Pepperdine University. These students are conducting their doctoral dissertations at Pepperdine University and employing a similar research methodology in their own research. The panel members have all completed a series of doctoral level courses in quantitative and qualitative research methods and data analysis. The panel was given a package that included a summary statement of this research paper, a copy of Table 2, and instructions to follow to determine if the interview questions adequately addressed the constructs investigated in the research question. The panel was presented with the following instructions:

Please review the summary statement attached to familiarize yourself with the purpose and goals of the study. Next refer to the table below and read each research question carefully. Next, review the corresponding interview questions. If you determine that the interview question is directly relevant to the corresponding research question, mark “The question is directly relevant to Research question 1 – Keep as stated.” If you find the

interview question irrelevant to the corresponding research question, mark “The question is irrelevant to research question 1 – delete it.” Finally, if you determine that to be relevant to the research question, the interview question must be modified, mark “The question should be modified as suggested.” and in the blank space provided recommend your modification. There is also space provided for you to recommend additional interview questions for each research question.

**Step 3: Pilot interview.** Using the protocol completed in step 2, a pilot interview was conducted with a person that met the criteria for participation. At the end of the interview, the questions and answers were refined and clarified. The input given was incorporated into the protocol.

**Step 4: Expert review.** The preliminary review panel’s recommendations were then presented to the dissertation review committee, which consisted of three faculty members. The recommendations were examined and approved or modified. In instances where a majority did not agree on a recommended modification, the committee chair had the final vote.

Table 2

*Research and Interview Questions: Review Table*

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1. What strategies and practices do leaders in education who use storytelling employ?	Interview Q1: What role does storytelling play in your leadership practice?
	*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.
	The question should be modified as suggested: _____
	Interview Q2: How do incorporate storytelling in your leadership practice?
	*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.
	The question should be modified as suggested: _____
	Interview Q3: As an educational leader, what inspires your stories?
	*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.
	The question should be modified as suggested: _____
	Interview Q4: What are the main sources of the stories you use to support your leadership practice?
	*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.
	The question should be modified as suggested: _____
	I recommend adding the following interview questions: _____ _____ _____ _____

(continued)

Research Questions	Interview Questions
2. What challenges do leaders in education who use storytelling in their leadership practice face?	Interview Q5: What elements need to be in place in the classroom for storytelling to be effective?
	*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.
	The question should be modified as suggested: _____
	Interview Q6: Is there a downside in using stories in your leadership practice?
	*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.
	The question should be modified as suggested: _____
	Interview Q7: As a storyteller what are the most significant challenges in your leadership journey?
	*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.
	The question should be modified as suggested: _____
	I recommend adding the following interview questions: _____ _____ _____ _____
3. How do leaders who use storytelling as a leadership practice measure their success?	Interview Q8: How do assess the extent to which storytelling enhances your leadership practice?
	*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.
	The question should be modified as suggested: _____
	Interview Q9: How do you become aware your stories aren't resonating with your audience?
	*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.
	The question should be modified as suggested: _____

(continued)

Research Questions	Interview Questions
	<p>Interview Q10: What do you do when your audience reacts negatively to a story tell you tell?</p> <p>*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.</p> <p>The question should be modified as suggested:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
4. What recommendations do leaders in education offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool?	<p>Interview Q11: Knowing what you know now about effective storytelling, what advice would you share with new storytellers?</p> <p>*If question is directly relevant to Research Question 1 keep as stated. *If question is irrelevant to Research Question 1 delete it.</p> <p>The question should be modified as suggested:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

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### Statement of Personal Bias

The researcher has been a substitute teacher for 8 years and has first-hand experience with telling stories in the classroom. His personal bias regarding the classroom helped him be more cognizant of the types of questions to ask the teachers. It also helped him to be better prepared for questions that might lead to emotional outbursts. In addition, he has been in the acting industry for 13 years. He has first-hand experience telling stories on television, on stage, and to large audiences. This personal bias helped him understand the types of stories teachers tell in the classroom. It also helped him understand the human subjects' approaches to telling stories. Because of these experiences it is important for separate personal biases to be bracketed.

Creswell (2013) substantiates bracketing, also known as epoche, by contending that it allows investigators to “set aside their experiences as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective towards the phenomenon in examination” (p. 80). It was vital for the accuracy of the study that preexisting bias did not affect the interpretation of the participants’ actual views and that their contributions were not compromised.

Therefore, the following steps were taken during the bracketing process in this study:

1. Before the interviewing process began, any biases, experiences, and past knowledge about storytelling were written down.
2. A bracketing journal was designated for the recording of any biased thoughts or preconceived notions that arose throughout any steps of the research process. This served to record any instance of bias in order to reflect on as the project continued.
3. Everything that was bracketed in the actual study was written down, so that readers could be aware of those biases when reading the results and interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2013).

### **Data Analysis**

Interrater reliability is established using a co-reviewer process. The data was coded individually. A table was produced where constructs (themes) arrived at through the content analysis were identified as column headings and each column contained key words/phrases that were used to arrive at the construct (theme). Next, a panel of two co-reviewers individually assessed the data coding. The co-reviewers then discussed the themes and key phrases and recommended changes and modifications as appropriate. Each co-reviewer’s recommendations were then reviewed with one of the members of the dissertation committee before finalizing the

coding process. Major constructs/themes arrived at and their descriptions and sample participant quotes are reported in Chapter 4.

To ensure that all of the aforementioned was executed in the data analysis process, Creswell's (2013) recommended steps to phenomenological analysis and representation were adapted:

1. Data organization: The researcher creates and organizes files for data. For this study the researcher converted the text through transcription.
2. Reading and annotating: The researcher reads through the text, making notes that form initial codes. In this study the researcher read the transcripts and made small notes in the margin of field notes, consisting of short phrases, ideas, or concepts.
3. Describing the data in codes, themes, and descriptions: In this section the researcher will describe personal experiences through epoche. The researcher will also describe the essence of the phenomenon. The coding process requires aggregating the text into 25-30 smaller categories of information.
4. Classifying data into themes: These themes can have subthemes. The researcher will develop significant statements and group them into meaning units.
5. Interpreting the data: The researcher will develop: textural description (which describes what happened), structural description (which talks about how it happened), and the essence of the experience.
6. Representing and visualizing the data: The researcher presents narration of the essence of the experience in tables, figures, or discussion.

### **Inter-Rater Validity**

The following steps occurred to ensure inter-rater reliability/validity:

1. Principal Investigator Coding-Step 1: Creswell (2013) talks about preparing raw data for analysis. The data was coded. Recurring themes in the interviews were gathered as a result of data analysis.
2. Peer Reviewer Validity-Step 2: The results were discussed with two peer reviewers. These peer reviewers were also doctoral students. The goal of this discussion was to arrive at a consensus regarding the coding results.
3. Expert Review Validity-Step 3: Expert review was conducted. The committee reviewed recommendations and results. If there was no consensus, the faculty would review the results and arrive at final coding results.

### **Summary**

This chapter summarized the methodological approach of this study, which conducted a qualitative phenomenological exploration of the best practices of storytellers in education. Participants were selected from the education industry: namely K-12 or college professors who use storytelling as an effective teaching strategy. A total of 15 participants participated in semi-structured interviews that were audio recorded, coded, and summarized. Chapter 4 displays the findings of the research. Chapter 5 suggests recommendations for future studies.

## Chapter 4: Findings

Leaders in education experience daily challenges while facilitating in the classroom and must adapt effective teaching strategies in storytelling. These challenges may include culture, generational gaps, learning environments, and many other considerations. Those who participated in this study have contributed their experiences so that leaders in the classroom can utilize best practices in storytelling as effective teaching strategies.

Effective teaching strategies are important in helping students succeed in a competitive working world. In a study conducted within an inner-city metropolitan school district, economists Raj Chetty, John Friedman, and Jonah Rockoff discovered that K-12 students who received a higher quality of education through effective teaching strategies went on to a higher quality colleges and universities. These same students also were more competitive in the workplace, earning higher salaries than many of their counterparts (Lee-Chua, 2013). Flynn et al. (2004) mentions how effective teaching strategies are instructional techniques that cause students to go beyond the first few levels of Bloom's taxonomy in learning. In ascending order Bloom's taxonomy includes: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Adams, 2015; Athanassiou, McNett, & Harvey 2003; Bloom, 1956). Buch and Wolff (2000) associate the purpose of storytelling to analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating, thereby connecting it to being an effective teaching strategy. Teaching strategies through storytelling are discovered in this study. This phenomenological study presents findings of best practices of storytelling leaders in education by reviewing four research questions and key interview questions that are connected.

The first research question covered strategies and practices employed by leaders in education who use storytelling. Research 1 one encouraged participants to reflect on practices

that they have refined over time to help students learn through storytelling. During the interviews, participants were asked about strategies and practices they used, how they incorporate stories and their inspirations and sources for telling stories. The four interview questions that went along with research question 1 allowed participants to open up about their experiences and be comfortable in answering other questions.

The second research question deals with challenges leaders in education who use storytelling face. This question allowed leaders in education to share stories about those unfavorable situations involving storytelling in the classroom. In reflecting on challenges, they were also able to talk about classroom elements that had to be in place to prevent challenges from occurring. Participants were asked three interview questions about elements that needed to be in place for effective storytelling, disadvantages to using stories, and their own personal challenges to storytelling.

Research question 3 addresses how leaders who use storytelling in education measure their success. It was vital for leaders who participated in this study to express success indicators because of the impact they can have on new storytelling leaders. New leaders can use the same measuring factors in teaching lessons through stories. The three interview questions that were associated with this research question cover how leaders measure the extent that stories enhance their curriculum, awareness that stories are not resonating and what can be done when students react negatively to stories.

The fourth and final research question requested recommendations to be offered to future storytelling leaders to use as leadership tools. This question was important because it offered helpful suggestions for what can be done to produce effective storytellers. The interview

question that was associated with this question asks storytelling leaders in education to offer advice based on what they know about storytelling. The specific questions were as follows:

1. How do assess the extent to which storytelling enhances your leadership practice?
2. How do you become aware your stories aren't resonating with your audience?
3. What do you do when your audience reacts negativity to a story tell your tell?
4. Knowing what you know now about effective storytelling, what advice would you share with new storytellers?

### **Participants**

To ensure diversity of storytelling leaders in education, the purposeful recruitment of participants for this study involved maximum variety selection. The recruitment process began with an Internet search of educators who have a justifiable connection to storytelling publically displayed on a virtual platform. The goal was to contact up to 20 participants to reach a sample size of 15. A total of 17 participants were contacted via email and business numbers. Of the 17 identified, one participant could not be reached via email or phone. A total of 16 leaders in education responded for an overall response rate of 94%. It is important to note that of the 16 that responded, one of the participants later declined due to scheduling conflicts during the interview period. As a result, a total of 15 leaders in education participated in this study. This sample was large enough so that a maximum variety of participants gave input on the best storytelling practices in education. The sample was also small enough so that data was effectively collected and managed. Table 3 shows all 15 leaders in education with a background in storytelling who agreed to participate in the study. Participants were grouped by participant number, educational teaching platform, and personal connection to storytelling (Table 3).

**Participants, educational platform, and connection to storytelling.** There were a total of 15 participants in this study. Each participant was either a leader in education teaching k-12 or higher education students. Out of the 15 participants, 53% taught higher education only, 20% taught k-12 only, and 27% taught both higher education and k-12. Each participant had a significant connection to storytelling. Table 3 shows study participants, their educational platform, and their connection to storytelling.

Table 3

*Participants in the Study, Their Educational Platform, and Their Connection to Storytelling*

Participants	Educational Platform	Connection to Storytelling
P1	K-12 /Higher Ed	Judge
P2	Higher Ed	Pastor
P3	K-12/ Higher Ed	Opera Singer
P4	K-12/ Higher Ed	English Language Learner Storyteller
P5	K-12/ Higher Ed	Traveling Puppeteer
P6	Higher Ed	Speech and Debate Coach
P7	Higher Ed	Politician
P8	Higher Ed	Leadership Trainer
P9	Higher Ed	Fashion Designer
P10	K-12	Film Maker
P11	Higher Ed	Children's Storybook Writer
P12	K-12	Television Actor
P13	K-12	Dancer
P14	Higher Ed	Comedian
P15	Higher Ed	Graphic Artist

**Gender.** There was an interesting difference in gender in this study. Men outnumbered the women in the gender ratio of this study. Out of 15 participants, nine were men (60%) and six were women (40%). Figure 3 shows the ratio percentile of men to women that participated in this study.

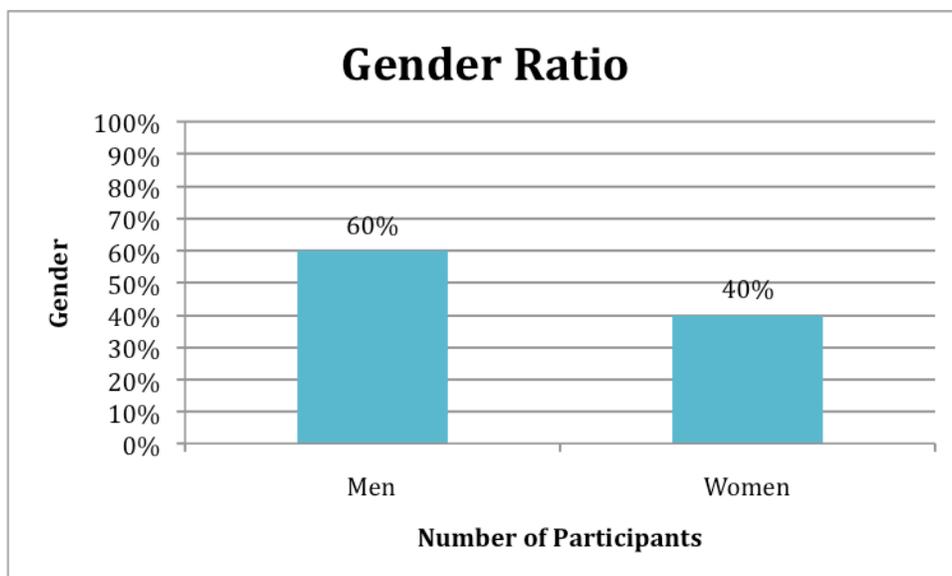


Figure 3. Gender ratio of participants.

**Ethnicity.** Among the 15 storytelling leaders in education who participated in this study, three ethnic groups were represented. African Americans made up the majority with 80%, 14% were Caucasian American, and 6% were Latino American. Figure 4 summarizes the ethnic demographics of the study participants.

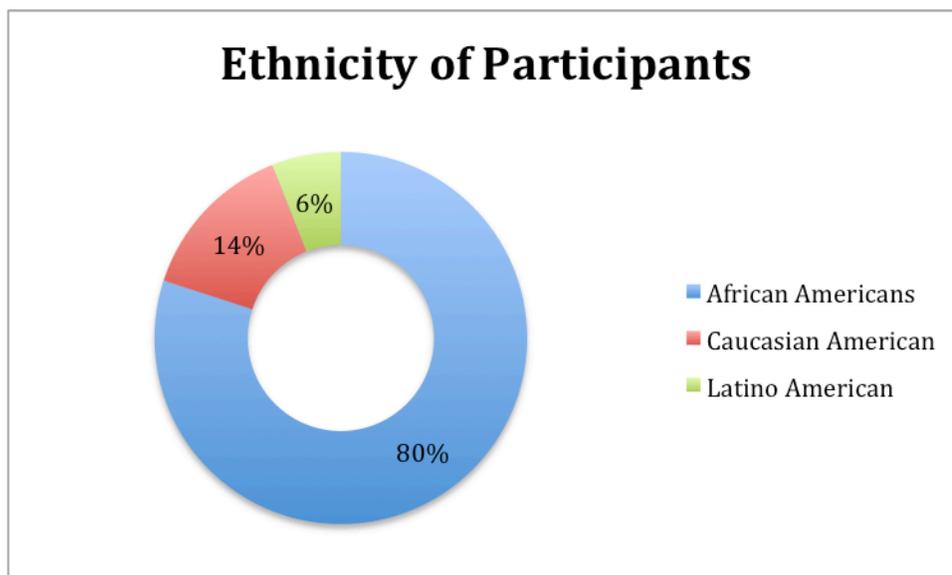


Figure 4. Ethnicity percentile of participants.

**Age.** The ages of the participants ranged from 30 to 63, with a median age of 48. Of those participants, 14% were between the ages of 30 to 39. Next, 46% of participants were between the ages of 40 to 49. A total of 26% of the participants were between the ages of 50 to 59. Additionally, 14% of participants were 60 years or older. Figure 5 contains a summary of the study's participant demographics based on age.

### Validating The Data: Inter-Rater Reliability

Creswell (2013) asserted the importance of validity and reliability to qualitative research. For this study, a four-step process was used to ensure validity and reliability. First, interview questions were designed. Second, the peer review process took place to ensure validity. Next, a pilot interview was conducted for more clarity. Finally, an expert review process was conducted.

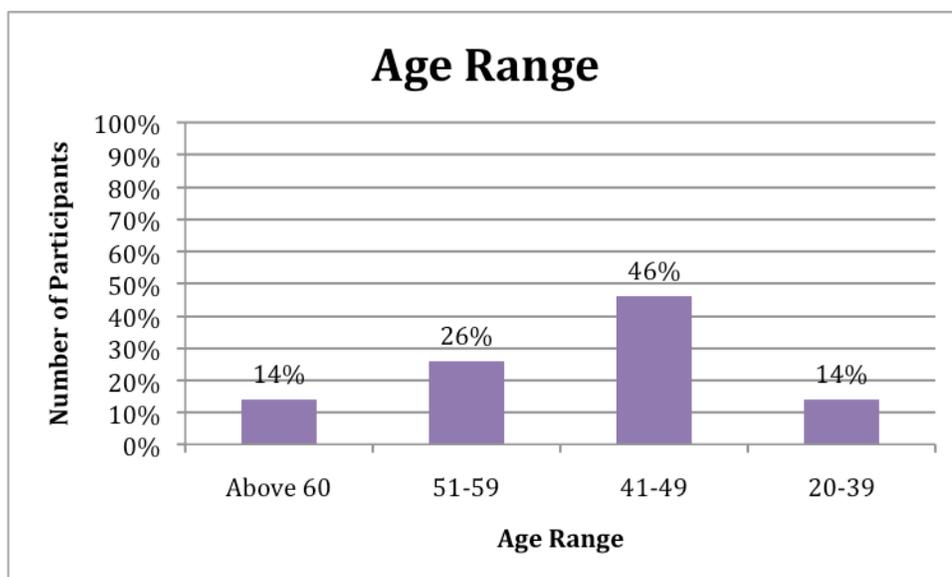


Figure 5. Age ranges of participants.

**Step 1: Prima facie validity.** Interview questions were designed for this study. These questions aligned with the four research questions that were a part of this study. The researcher ensured that the 11 interview questions offered the best way to discover best practices, challenges, successes, and future recommendations of storytelling leaders in education.

**Step 2: Peer review validity.** A table was developed to show the relationship between the interview questions and the research questions. The table was then peer reviewed by a preliminary panel of co-reviewers. These co-reviewers were also doctorate students in the EDOL program at Pepperdine University. They were qualified as co-reviewers because they completed doctoral level classes in qualitative and quantitative research methods and data analysis.

**Step 3: Pilot interview.** For further clarity, a pilot interview was conducted with an individual who met the general criteria for participation. After the interview, more clarity and understanding was gained. The interview questions were distinctly refined to meet the needs of each participant that was going to be interviewed in this study. After the interviews took place they were transcribed and coded into themes. The co-reviewers reviewed each theme for validity. Every theme was agreed upon and nothing was changed.

**Step 4: Expert review.** In the final process, the final draft of themes and theme titles were presented to the dissertation review committee. This committee was composed of three faculty members. Everything was examined and approved or modified. If the committee could not come to a conclusion on a modification, the committee chair would get the final vote.

### **Data Collection**

Each participant was provided with a modified informed consent form and was asked whether they consented to being recorded. Each participant agreed. All participants went through the necessary requirements set by the International Review Board and Federal Guidelines at Pepperdine University. The interviews occurred at locations convenient for each participant. The researcher went to each location 30 minutes early to ensure the meeting location was secured. All recording equipment was tested to make sure it worked properly. The interview was captured on a cell phone. Each interview consisted of the following questions:

- What role does storytelling play in your leadership practice?
- How do you incorporate storytelling in your leadership practice?
- As an educational leader, what inspires your stories?
- What are the main sources of the stories you use to support your leadership practice?
- What elements need to be in place in the classroom for storytelling to be effective?
- Is there a downside in using stories in your leadership practice?
- As a storyteller what are your most significant challenges?
- How do you assess the extent to which storytelling enhances your leadership practice?
- How do you become aware your stories aren't resonating with your audience?
- What do you do when your audience reacts negatively to a story tell you tell?
- Knowing what you know now about effective storytelling, what advice would you share with new storytellers?

After the interviews, each participant was given a \$6 Starbucks gift card in appreciation for their time. Creswell's (2013) four major steps to interviewing were used as a guide throughout the interview:

1. Use a header to record essential information about the project and as a reminder to go over the purpose of the study with the interviewee.
2. Place space between the questions in the protocol form.
3. Memorize questions and their order to minimize losing eye contact with the participant.
4. Write out the closing comments that thank the individual for the interview and request follow-up information, if needed from him or her. (p. 169)

## **Data Analysis**

In the course of data analysis, the following actions were performed: exploring, explaining, theorizing, categorizing, defining, and mapping out the information received (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). He also made sure to use data reduction so that all of the accumulated information was analyzed in a way where conclusions could be sharpened and verified (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To carry out this process, Creswell's (2013) steps were followed:

1. Data organization. The researcher compiled files through transcription.
2. Reading and annotating. The researcher read the transcribed interviews and made notes on concepts.
3. Describing the data in codes, themes, and descriptions. The researcher coded data by aggregating the text into 25-30 smaller categories of information. This procedure was inductive, which enabled the codes to evolve from themes and patterns (Thomas, 2003).
4. Classifying data into themes. The researcher put themes into smaller units.
5. Interpreting the data. The researcher developed textural description (which describes what happened), structural description (which discusses how it happened), and the essence of the experience.
6. Representing and visualizing the data. The researcher developed and presented the data on graphs.

## **Data Display**

The data were organized according to research questions. Charts, short stories, and phrases were used to display the different themes that emerged in the interviews. The data was redacted and presented in a way to honor the confidentiality that was assured to each participant.

As a result, the participants were referred to as P1, P2, and so on. Themes were coded in conjunction with the theoretical framework that came from the literature. Frequency charts were created to record the numerical repetition of the themes.

### **Research Question 1**

Research question 1 as previously stated in chapters one and three asks: What strategies and practices do leaders in education who use storytelling employ? The participants were asked four clarifying questions:

- What role does storytelling play in your leadership practice?
- How do you incorporate storytelling in your leadership practice?
- As an educational leader, what inspires your stories?
- What are the main sources of the stories you use to support your leadership practice?

**Interview question 1.** Interview question 1 asks: What role does storytelling play in your leadership practice? This question was essential in starting the interview process. The aim of this question was to obtain key concepts that indicated practical themes that could be used by new storytellers.

All of the interview questions were individually coded to make sure that the results were mutually exclusive and collectively compiled. The first theme had eight items. The second theme had three items. The third theme had three items. The fourth theme had two items. The fifth theme had three items. The coding structure for this interview was reviewed, as well as the rest of the interview questions with two co-reviewers. Per chapter three, the two co-reviewers consisted of doctoral students that had a substantial amount of experience in coding from previous classes. They are currently working on their dissertations. After reviewing the themes with the co-reviewers, it was decided that nothing needed to be changed. Figure 6 shows the

themes coded from interview question 1. There was a precipitous drop between the first four themes and the remaining one, thus separating the significant view from the trivial remaining.

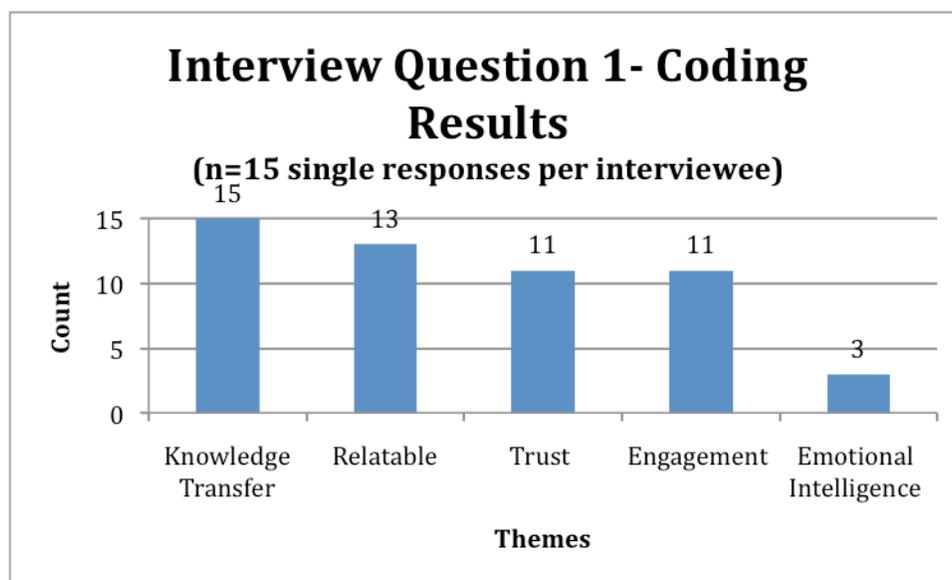


Figure 6. Role of storytelling in leadership practice.

**Findings.** After reviewing the data multiple times, themes emerged as noted in Figure 6. These themes represent strategies and practices storytelling leaders employ in education: knowledge transfer, relatable, trust, engagement and emotional intelligence. They are listed in descending order from most to least voted roles of storytelling in leadership practice.

*Knowledge transfer.* This theme refers to the movement of knowledge from storyteller to listener. All participants in this study agreed that knowledge transfer was a primary reason for storytelling. Leaders in education transfer knowledge in the classroom when painting a picture of something new through storytelling. Characteristics that participants called out under this theme were teaching, understanding, finding meaning, interpreting, critical thinking, analyzing, and explaining. P2 said, “I am here as an instructor to transfer knowledge. It’s not just the skill of what you are teaching. It’s the knowledge of your experience that needs to be transferred to the students” (P2, personal communication, February 2016).

*Relatable.* This theme includes the ability to identify with another person. Leaders in education trigger relatable instances with students through telling stories. The general consensus was that characteristics that arose under this theme were relatable, building a connection, and teacher relevance. P2 talked about being able to connect with students through relatable stories. “If you want to move people up Bloom’s taxonomy and make the information memorable, stories are a powerful way of making an emotional connection with the content so it becomes relatable and translates to being memorable” (P7, personal communication, February 2016).

*Trust.* The theme of trust pertains to confidence a person generates and their reliability. Trust is an important facet of storytelling because it can set the tone for how teachers are received in the classroom. Learning takes place when teachers are well received in the classroom. Characteristics that came up under this theme were trust, increased comfort levels, and authenticity. P12 talks about how her stories help students see her as a human being and not as the enemy because she is a judge.

It helps me to connect to my students. As a judge I have noticed that there is a tendency not to trust African Americans with positions of certain authority and law. They feel like you have crossed over and are on the other side. In the classroom storytelling is a kind of way to humanize who I am and what I do. It builds trust. (P12, personal communication, February 2016)

*Engagement.* This theme refers to getting involved with someone or something. Storytelling used for the purpose of engagement helps students to participate in various class deliverables. For example, deliverable may be a group project. Storytelling could initiate group thinking to begin a collaborative workflow. Characteristics that were discussed under this theme

were engagement and motivation. One participant stated, “I use storytelling as a way to catch their attention” (P13, personal communication, February 2016).

*Emotional intelligence.* The theme of emotional intelligence looks into developing a better sense of one’s self (Goleman, 1998). Students learn about their own qualities, like things that they feel passionate about, when they hear stories that encourage emotional intelligence. Characteristics that became present in this theme included accepting oneself, self-discovery, and healing. According to one educational leader, “In exercising their own emotional intelligences, my stories help students apply something that is foreign to them in a way that they will be able to work through a problem” (P3, personal communication, February 2016).

**Interview question 2.** Interview question 2 asks, how do you incorporate storytelling in your leadership practice? The answers to this question were important for new storytellers who were seeking advice on the perfect time to tell stories. Timing is crucial when embedding stories in lessons.

Four themes were devised for questions two. Seven participants agreed to theme one. Five participants agreed to theme two. One participant agreed to theme three. Only one participant agreed to theme four. The co-reviewers all agreed to what was coded in interview question 2 and that nothing needed to change. Figure 7 shows the themes coded from interview question 2. There was a precipitous drop between the first two themes and the remaining two, thus separating the significant view from the trivial remaining.

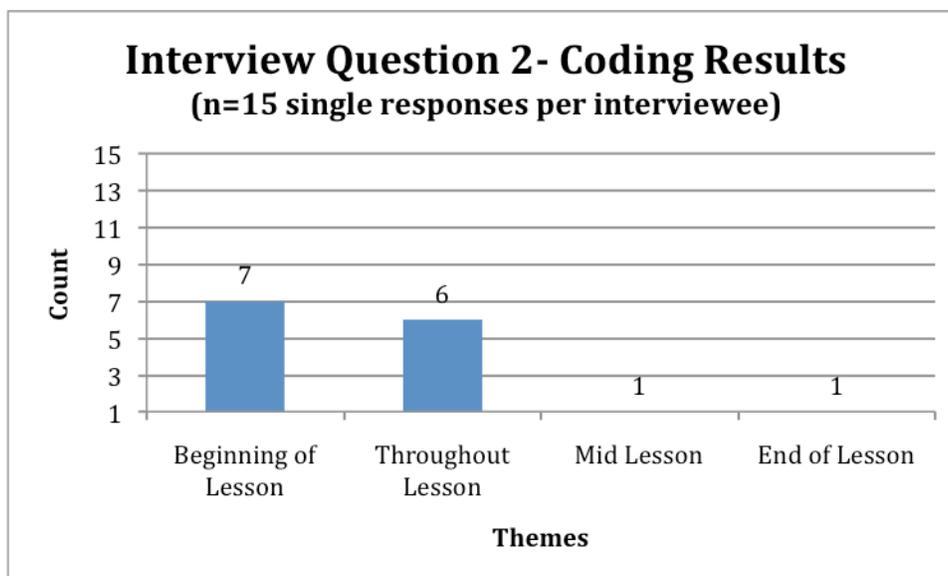


Figure 7. How to incorporate stories in leadership practice.

**Findings.** After looking at the data repeatedly, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 7. These themes represent how leaders in education incorporate storytelling in their leadership practice: before the lesson, throughout the lesson, in the middle of the lesson, and at the end of the lesson. They are listed in descending order from most to least popular ways of incorporating stories in leadership practice.

*Before the lesson.* The theme of “before the lesson” explores how leaders in education use narratives to introduce the lesson by telling stories at the beginning of class. Of the participants, 47% agreed that they incorporated stories at the beginning of class before teaching the lesson. P8 said the following:

I incorporate storytelling in the very beginning of my leadership practice because it sets the stage of receiving the context of the lesson. Storytelling opens the door and allows the student to be receptive of whatever the topic is and relating it to their everyday lives. Coming to an ESL learning environment is not just for social purposes, but they need to increase their knowledge of speaking English for better jobs, higher pay raises, or the ability to speak to their child’s school officials and understand them. Storytelling helps

bridge that gap and I create that bridge from the very beginning so there is an immediate connection that the students have to the story. (P8, personal communication, February 2016)

*Throughout the lesson.* This theme refers to telling stories throughout the process of teaching a class lesson. As many as 40% of participants stated that they used this practice. P1 mentioned how telling stories throughout the lesson can serve as a validation through the different sections of what is being taught (personal communication, February 2016).

*Mid-lesson.* This theme refers to leaders in education telling stories in the middle of the lesson being taught. One participant agreed to this idea. In particular, P12 thought it was best to use stories in the middle to save the beginning and end of the time allotted for introducing and reinforcing the actual lesson (P12, personal communication, February 2016).

*End of lesson.* This theme refers to telling stories at the end of a class lesson. P12 said, “I start serious with the business at hand and follow up with a story” (P12, personal communication, February 2016). This enabled him to leave students with something to remember. One advantage to telling stories at this time is the ability to leave students with a lasting impression that can be tied back into the lesson. Only 6% of the participants agreed to this practice.

**Interview question 3.** Interview question 3 asks: As an educational leader, what inspires your stories? Inspiration is a key part of telling stories because that is how stories are created. Inspiration can come in many different forms. The input of the educational leaders was important in determining sources of inspiration for storytelling.

For interview question 3, four themes were devised. There are two items listed in theme one. Theme two has three items listed. Theme three has two items listed. Theme four includes

one item. Both co-reviewers agreed to the coded structure of interview question 3 and nothing needed to be changed. Figure 8 shows the themes coded from interview question 3. There was a precipitous drop between the first two themes and the remaining two, thus separating the significant view from the trivial remaining.

**Findings.** After analyzing at the data repeatedly, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 8. These themes represent what inspired the stories of storytelling leaders in education: curriculum, human experience, demographic, and student questions. They are listed in descending order from most to least voted inspirations for storytelling in leadership practice.

*Curriculum.* This theme refers to what is required by institutional standards for the students to learn. For example, students in math classes have to perform at certain levels in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Storytellers may begin classes with stories that introduce the students to the math lesson that needs to be learned that day. In particular, participant ten said, “I am inspired by the exhibition or the lesson” (personal communication, February 2016).

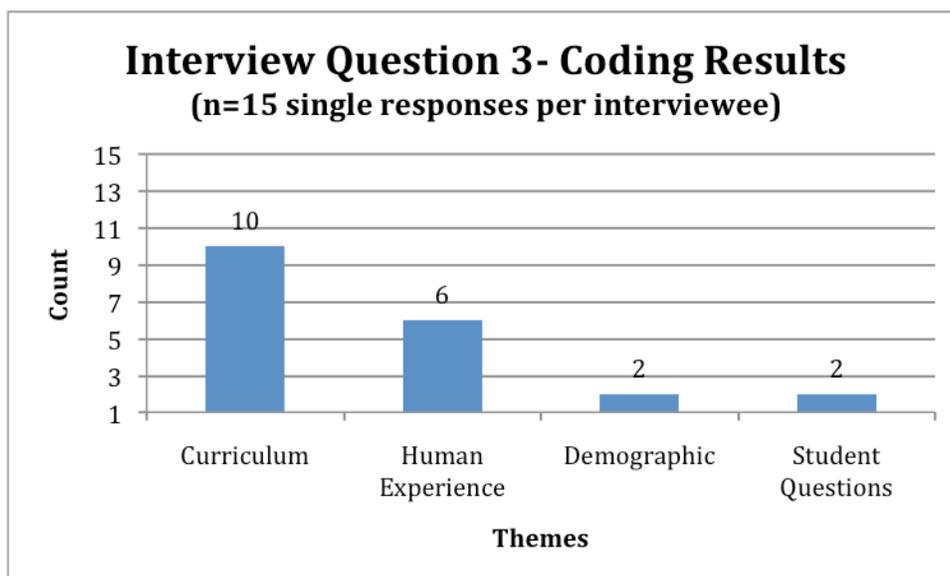


Figure 8. Inspiration for stories.

*Human experience.* This theme pertains to the life experiences individuals have encountered. These experiences could have happened in the past or present. Human experience

can also include current events about experiences that others have experienced. For example, 13% of the participants mentioned telling stories in the classroom about the upcoming presidential election. P4 stated, “My stories are inspired by everything that has happened in the past and what’s happening today” (personal communication, February 2016).

*Demographics.* This theme refers the composition of the student population. Demographics can include race, gender, culture, and age. Telling stories that reflect the demographics can help make topics more relatable. This theme confirms the research that states storytelling contributes to the acceptance of diversity by allowing people to see perspectives in a different way (Barker and Gower, 2010). P8, a teacher for ESL students said, “I am inspired my ESL demographic. Their stories need to evolve around grocery shopping, bill paying and helping them to communicate with their children’s teachers” (personal communication, February 2016).

*Student questions.* This theme includes inquiries that students may have for the instructor. Feeding off of students’ questions helps teachers determine the types of stories to tell. P3 said:

My stories are inspired by questions that students ask me. I have students who ask me about a variety of things in the curriculum all of the time. I also have students who ask me about my life and my experiences to the subject I’m teaching. Sometimes it is not enough to just answer the question. Telling a story paints a more vivid picture of the solution they are trying to get. (P3, personal communication, February 2016)

**Interview question 4.** Interview question 4 asks: What are the main sources of the stories you use to support your leadership practice? Sources contain the essence of effective storytelling in the classroom. Sources revealed came through the following coding and analysis and findings.

For interview question 4, three themes were compiled. There are four items listed in theme one. There are eight items listed in theme two. Theme three has one item in it. The co-reviewers agreed to the coded structure of interview question 4 and did not change anything. Figure 9 shows the themes coded from interview question 4. There was a precipitous drop between the first two themes and the third theme, thus separating the significant view from the trivial remaining.

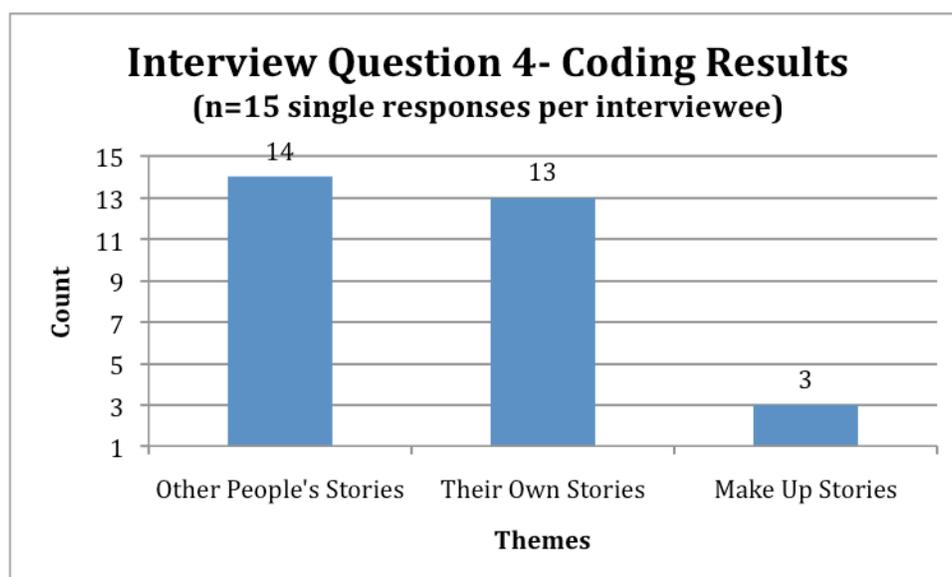


Figure 9. Main sources of stories used.

**Findings.** After reviewing the data many times, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 9. These themes represent what inspires the sources of the stories told by storytelling leaders in education: other people's stories, their own stories, make up stories. They are listed in descending order from most to least voted sources of stories used.

*Other people's stories.* This theme refers to storytellers using other people's stories in their leadership practice. Of the participants, 93% admitted to telling other people's stories. Items that appeared in this theme include news, current events, student stories, family stories, literature, published authors, and the Bible. P4 says:

Sometimes it's a story based on a news event because we might be covering something like Black Lives Matter. Last semester we also covered hip-hop and used hip-hop as the text of the class. So I was able to use my own personal experience. We referenced the song "Self Destruction," a big hit from the 1980s all about stopping the violence and then I talked to my students about being on the school bus on the way to school and how all my friends heard this on the radio and we were chanting it not even realizing how important that would be ultimately to our society, to our own African American community growing up in Baltimore. So it's great when we get the opportunity to bring that real inspiration into the classroom. Being able to quote humorous bits from my acts and others peoples' acts as a comedian certainly adds to the color in the classroom. (P4, personal communication, February 2016)

*Their own stories.* This theme deals with leaders using their own stories as sources in the classroom. Items that appeared in this theme were situations teachers experienced growing up and stories from their own personal connection to storytelling outside of teaching. P11 says, "My stories come from my experience as a television actor. In the classroom I tell stories that I have experienced in front of the camera and behind the scenes with my experiences with directors and other actors" (P11, personal communication, February 2016).

*Make up stories.* This theme involves leaders making up stories to use as a source for teaching in the classroom. This is important when it comes to challenging the imagination of students. Teachers also make up stories when they don't have personal stories to tell. P10 makes up stories that go along with his puppets. He said,

My stories come from a mixture of sources. For example, I make up stories based on the connection I would like my puppets to make with my students. I want my students to

learn about trust, I will make up a story about my puppet traveling to a land far far away and having to meet other children he eventually had to learn to trust. (P10, personal communication, February 2016)

**Research question 1 summary.** For the purposes of this study, best strategies and practices of storytellers in education were incumbent on the role of storytelling, how it is incorporated in the classroom, the inspiration and the sources of stories being told. The findings indicated that the role of storytelling is defined with five themes: knowledge transfer, relatable, trust, engagement, and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence deals with an inward look of self-awareness (Goleman, 1998). P3 noticed that his students experienced a heightened sense of self-awareness when they heard his stories (personal communication, February 2016). The data showed that stories were incorporated mostly in the beginning and throughout a lesson in class. Storytellers were inspired by curriculum, human experience, demographic, and student questions. The sources of the stories told were mainly other people's stories and their own stories.

## **Research Question 2**

Research question 2 as previously stated in chapters one and three asks: What challenges do leaders in education who use storytelling in their leadership practice face? To answer this question the participants were asked the following interview questions:

1. What elements need to be in place in the classroom for storytelling to be effective?
2. Is there a downside in using stories in your leadership practice?
3. As a storyteller, what are your most significant challenges?

**Interview question 5.** Interview question 5 asks: What elements need to be in place in the classroom for storytelling to be effective? Elements are important because they set the tone

for effective storytelling. Elements were called out in the following coding and analysis and findings.

Interview question 5 contains four themes. There are five items listed in theme one. There are five items listed in theme two. Theme three has four items in it. Theme four has one item in it. The co-reviewers agreed to the coded structure of interview question 5, not changing anything. Figure 10 shows the themes coded from interview question 5. There was a precipitous drop between the first two themes and the remaining themes thus separating the significant view from the trivial remaining.

**Findings.** After analyzing the data, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 10. These themes represent what elements need to be in place for storytelling to be effective: trust, environment, cultural competency, and time. They are listed in descending order from most to least voted elements needed for effective storytelling.

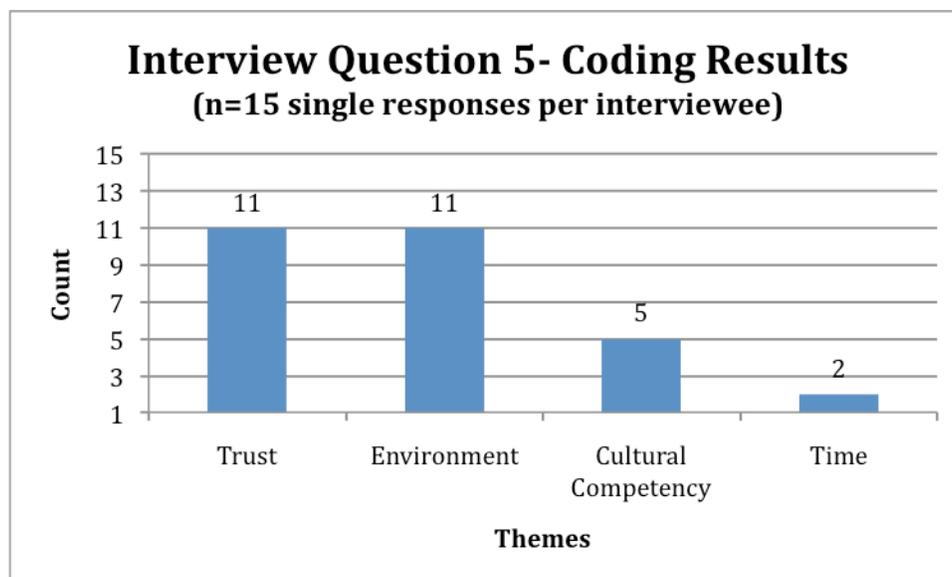


Figure 10. Elements for effective storytelling.

**Trust.** This theme refers to an atmosphere of reliability and confidence placed on the teacher by the students. Items that appeared in this theme include trust, relationship, respect, interest from students, and an openness to receive stories. P4 says, “The bridge to building trust

needs to be established for storytelling to be effective” (personal communication, February 2016).

*Environment.* This theme deals with the surroundings or conditions in the classroom. The five items in this theme were environment, visuals, sound, focus and atmosphere. P13 speaks about changing desks around in the classroom:

In the summer we sat in a half circle. I wasn't in the center or anything. It was like I was one the students to show them we are all in this together and we are all telling that one story. (P13, personal communication, February 2016)

*Cultural competency.* This theme consists of recognizing the differences in demographics in the classroom. It is vital for teachers to be culturally competent when teaching classes where there are diverse genders, religions, sexual orientation, age gaps, etc. The four items that were in this theme were cultural competency, sensitivity, discernment, and generational gap awareness. For P6, it was important to note that storytelling enhances interpersonal relationships:

We challenge our students to really begin to build a bridge between their own experiences and views to the views of others. We have transgender students that are a part of our program and they are drawn to poetry about transgender and trans-identified people who are coming to terms with their identity and place in the world. We encourage those students to speak about their beliefs and the culture in which they live and to study the works of authors who they identify with. This helps the other students be culturally competent of the diversity that's represented in the classroom. (personal communication, February 2016)

*Time.* This theme refers to having enough opportunity in class for storytelling to take place. P9 is a math teacher at a K-12 institution. P9 says:

As a math teacher the curriculum is so demanding because we have to teach so many concepts a day. It allows little to no time for storytelling. I personally had to do some creative adjusting to my beginning and ending class routines to create a curriculum that allowed enough time for storytelling. (personal communication, February 2016)

**Interview question 6.** Interview question 6 asks: Is there a downside in using stories in your leadership practice? Not only is it important to talk about the positives in storytelling; it's also relevant to discuss the negatives. Downsides are called out in the following coding and analysis and findings.

For interview question 6, three themes were assembled. There were two items listed in theme one, two items listed in theme two, and one item in theme three. The co-reviewers looked over the coded structure for interview question 6 and agreed to no changes. Figure 11 shows the themes coded from interview question 6. There was a precipitous drop between the first two themes and the remaining theme, thus separating the significant view from the trivial remaining.

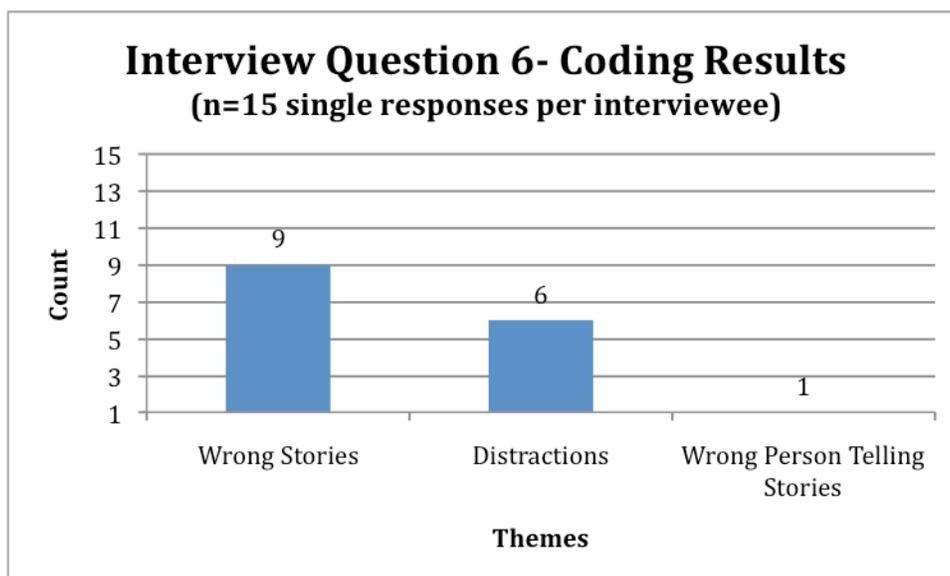


Figure 11. Downside to storytelling.

**Findings.** After evaluating the data, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 11. These themes represent the downside for storytelling in the classroom: telling the wrong stories, distraction,

and the wrong person telling stories. They are listed in descending order from most to least voted downsides to storytelling in leadership practice.

*Telling the wrong stories.* This theme refers to not connecting the right stories to students in the classroom. Wrong stories can confuse students and hinder learning. The two items associated with this theme were telling the wrong stories and generational gaps. P11 stated, “A downside is telling a story that doesn’t engage students. That could speak to the actually story being told ” (personal communication, February 2016).

*Distraction.* This theme deals with students getting so caught up in stories that their attention is taken from the actual lesson. The two items associated with this them are distractions and being too political. Being too political could end in huge debates and uneasy feelings. P1 said, “The story can become a distraction. It can distract the listener from the true purpose of the story ” (P1, personal communication, February 2016).

*Wrong person telling stories.* This theme has to do with the storyteller not being the right person to tell stories to an audience. P6 discussed how the wrong storyteller raised many uneasy questions among his fellow students:

Implicit bias is a downside to telling stories when we think the wrong person is telling them. It’s the idea that certain stories belong to certain people. For example, can people who are not African American really tell the stories of the pains and struggles of what it is to be a Black person in the slums of a major city in America today? There is a big controversy in our debate and speech community from a student who appears to be white but in his storytelling he has lines where he says, ‘What am I going to tell my black children. What am I going to tell my Black sons who are becoming Black men in this world today?’ In his storytelling he changes his accent and his pronunciation of words to

where he puts on an urban accent to insinuate he's Black. He later switches out of the "Black" accent into the "White" accent and finishes his story. Consequently, the downsides were dealing with biases, the question of stereotyping and the question of who has the right to tell what story. (personal communication, February 2016)

**Interview question 7.** Interview question 7 asks: As a storyteller what are the most significant challenges in your leadership journey? Knowing challenges prepares storytellers for problems that they may face in the classroom. It can empower storytellers to equip themselves when delivering narratives.

For interview question 7, four themes developed. There were four items listed in theme one. There were three items listed in theme two. Theme three had one item in it. There were two items in theme four. The co-reviewers looked over the coded structure for interview question 7 and agreed to no changes. Figure 12 shows the themes coded from interview question 7. There was a precipitous drop between the first theme and the remaining three themes, thus separating the significant view from the trivial many.

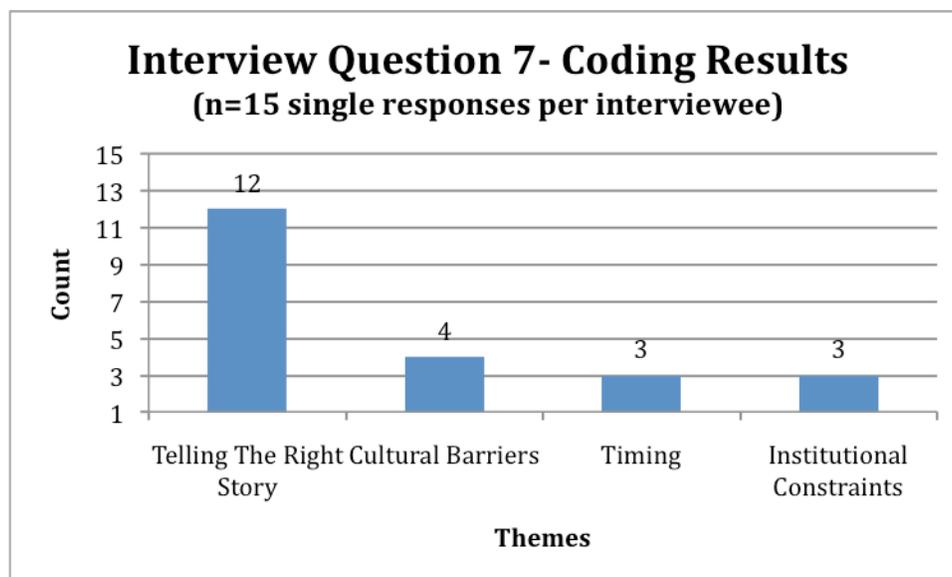


Figure 12. Significant challenges in storytelling.

**Findings.** After analyzing the data, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 12. These themes represent significant challenges storytelling leaders faced in their leadership journey: telling the right stories, cultural barriers, timing, and institutional constraints. They are listed in descending order from most to least voted significant challenges storytelling.

*Telling the right stories.* This theme deals with implementing the appropriate stories in lessons. Items in this theme consist of telling the right stories, generational gaps, addressing political concerns, and relevance. It is important for teachers to stay relevant so that they can tell stories that students can relate to. Helping students relate to their own experiences aligns with Malcolm Knowles adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2012). P14 struggled with student focus: “Keeping the kids focus. I have to tell a good story to do so. The biggest problem is lack of focus” (personal communication, February 2016).

*Cultural barriers.* This theme deals with being able to recognize differences among students. The items listed in this theme are cultural barriers, language, and knowing your audience. P8 says:

One of my challenges in an ESL classroom can easily be an age gap. The ESL classroom can consist of students at teenager age or adolescent all the way to senior citizens. So when you are telling stories you need to be aware of age differences which means generational shifts in what a teenager thinks and what an 87 year old thinks. I can't tell a story about Frank Sinatra and expect to relate to a younger crowd all of the time. I can't tell a story about pop singer Selena Gomez and expect my 87-year-old student to comprehend what's going on. (personal communication, February 2016)

*Timing.* This theme has to do with knowing when it is the right time to tell a story. Timing is important when deciding if it is appropriate to tell a story during a lesson. Timing also

dictates whether or not a story is necessary to be told. Every lesson may not need a story. Leaders in education must decipher those moments. In particular, this point was relevant to P11, “Timing may be an issue. Some people can’t connect to stories because the timing may call for something more visual. The timing has to be right to tell a story” (personal communication, February 2016).

*Institutional constraints.* This theme refers to restrictions that may be imposed by the school itself. The two items in this theme were curriculum and school resources. In this instance, school resources could be a lack of technology or visual aid to assist in storytelling. This resonated with P9: “When I first started teaching we didn’t have enough books or paper. We would run out. We also didn’t have state of the art equipment, and technology to promote the type of digital storytelling I wanted to get my students involved in” (personal communication, February 2016).

**Research question 2 summary.** In this study, leaders in education who use storytelling face challenges that have to do with classroom elements that need to be in place, downsides to storytelling, and their own significant challenges in storytelling. The data demonstrated that trust, environment, cultural competency, and time all are important as classroom elements when it comes to storytelling.

Telling the wrong stories, distraction, and the wrong person telling the story can be a disadvantage for leaders using storytelling in their leadership practice in education. When asked what their most significant challenges as storytellers were, a dominant number of leaders indicated that it was telling the right story, cultural barriers, timing, and institutional constraints. P6 challenged the notion of whether a white person is qualified to tell a story detailing the struggles of minorities as an African American. When this happened at his school, both teacher

and students could not get the message from the story because the Caucasian person whom was telling the story distracted them. They “couldn’t receive the message” (personal communication, February). In alignment with the literature, Kaye and Jacobson (1999) stated that the right person telling the story would cause the audience to receive the message of the story and understand something that was only superficially known before.

### **Research Question 3**

Research question 3 as previously stated in chapters one and three asks: How do leaders who use storytelling as a leadership practice measure their success? To answer this question the participants were asked the following interview questions:

1. How do you assess the extent to which storytelling enhances your leadership practice?
2. How do you become aware your stories aren’t resonating with your audience?
3. What do you do when your audience reacts negativity to a story tell your tell?

**Interview question 8.** Interview question 8 asks: How do you assess the extent to which storytelling enhances your leadership practice? This question is a crucial element in measuring the success of storytelling. This question provides important points that can be utilized by future storytelling leaders in education.

For interview question 8, four themes were created. There were six items listed in theme one. There were eight items listed in theme two. Theme three had five items in it. Theme four had three items in it. The co-reviewers agreed to the coded structure of interview question 8. Nothing was changed. Figure 13 shows the themes coded from interview question 8.

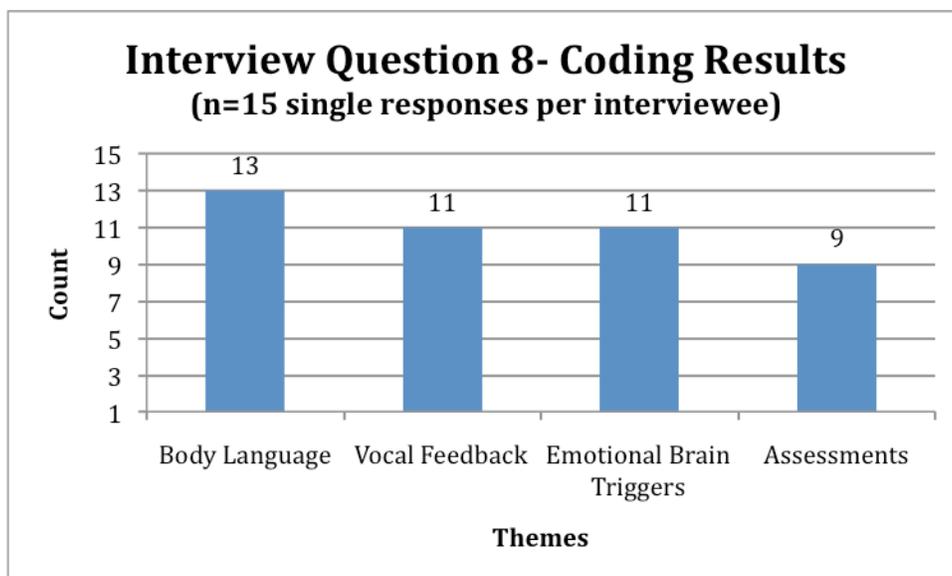


Figure 13. Assessing the extent of storytelling enhancement.

**Findings.** After reviewing the data, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 13. These themes represent how leaders assess the extent to which storytelling enhances their leadership practice: body language, vocal feedback, emotional brain triggers and assessments. They are listed in descending order from most to least popular ways of assessing the extent of storytelling enhancement.

*Body language.* This theme refers to storytelling leaders being aware that their storytelling is successful by the use of nonverbal responses from students. The following items appeared in this theme: body language, facial expressions, nodding, laughing, more relaxed and trusting and eye contact. P7 feels very strongly about noticing eye contact when telling stories in the classroom:

I can look at the eyes of the class. And I'm very intentional about moving when I am teaching. I don't stand still. I'm very dynamic in the way that I present and I do that purposely because if my stories are hitting home and I'm connecting with people, their eyes follow me around the room. I found that the more that they are looking into my

eyes, the more that I know that the story is connecting. (personal communication, February 2016)

*Vocal feedback.* This theme involves students being receptive to stories by talking. Items in this theme include: vocal feedback, adding the conversation, asking questions, talking about other related topics, laughter, engaging in conversation, conservative to outgoing feedback and mimicking the teachers' stories by telling stories of their own. P13 reflected on how her high school senior students affirmed her stories by talking about how they were impacted. Her students said that her stories helped them gain more confidence to open up and be more transparent in their personal statements during their college application process (personal communication, February 2016).

*Emotional brain triggers.* This theme deals with emotions and feelings being expressed as a result of storytelling that connects to the brain. Items in this theme are emotions, feelings, knowledge retaining through neuron connections and critical thinking. P10 says:

The brain is a physical thing in the head. As a physical thing it actually uses this intangible thing, which are neurons and they connect energy. Without energy you don't have a working brain. The mind is where you build the connecting scenarios.

Storytelling is about connecting a series of actions or events. The brain works in such a way that to make sense the neurons actually connect to each other from beginning middle to end and then looping back again. So you have tangible and intangible working inside a person's head. (personal communication, February 2016)

*Assessments.* This theme refers to a form of evaluating learning. The three items in this theme include assessments, evaluations and quizzes. P9 uses assessments, evaluations, and

quizzes to gauge the level of effectiveness of his storytelling in the classroom (personal communication, February 2016).

**Interview question 9.** Interview question 9 asks: How do you become aware your stories aren't resonating with your audience? Being aware of how stories impact students can determine whether a story should or should not be told in learning environments. The following coding and analysis and findings show the results of this question in this study.

Interview question 9 consisted of three themes. There were three items listed in theme one. There were six items listed in theme two. Theme three had four items in it. The co-reviewers agreed to the coded structure of interview question 9. Nothing was changed. Figure 14 shows the themes coded from interview question 9.

**Findings.** After evaluating the data, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 14. These themes represent how storytellers become aware that their stories aren't resonating with their audiences: body language, preoccupied, and vocal acknowledgement. They are listed in descending order from most to least voted awareness indicators of non-resonating stories told.

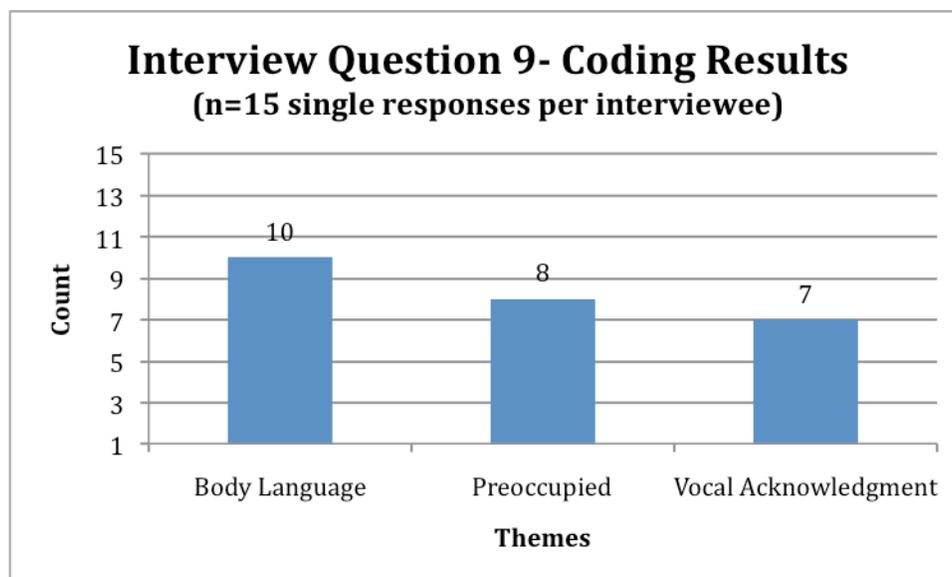


Figure 14. Awareness of non-resonating stories.

**Body language.** This theme deals with storytelling leaders being aware that their storytelling is not resonating because of nonverbal actions from students. Items in this theme include: body language, no eye contact and students not leaning in. A large number of participants felt that students are not leaning in is one of the main indicators of lack of interest. P6 described this as, “I notice that my stories are not sitting well with my students because of their nonverbal reactions like not being leaned in” (personal communication, February 2016)

**Preoccupied.** This theme deals with students doing another physical action instead of listening when storytelling leaders are telling stories. Items in this theme are preoccupied, falling asleep, shuffling, looking up words in the dictionary, sidebar conversations, and whispering among each other. When teachers are storytelling, some ESL students may tune out from listening to stories and focus on looking up words in the dictionary that they don’t understand. P8 recalled, “When teachers are storytelling, some ESL students may tune out from listening to stories and focus on looking up words in the dictionary that they don’t understand” (personal communication, February 2016).

**Vocal acknowledgement.** This theme involves receiving feedback from students when stories are not resonating. Items in this theme are speaking up, grunts, being too quiet, and oral review. P10 tells the story of how his colleague’s storytelling to students did not resonate with them:

I witnessed a class where my colleague told a story as a puppeteer that did not resonate with his audience. We were in a New York suburb setting and these were middle class African American students and parents. My colleague used the puppeteer concept of Homie the Clown, which is kind of a ghettoized clown character that is really satire. He had a couple of kids come up on stage and he wanted them to demonstrate how smart they were. One volunteer was a girl and one was a boy. Homie the Clown determined that

the girl could not do xyz because she was a girl. As soon as he said that I felt the energy and mercurial temperature in that audience with these middle class parents rise and they booed him off the stage. He didn't get a chance to finish his shtick because he was set up to say at the beginning 'Oh girls can't do this because you are a girl.' He was leading into 'Well maybe I was wrong.' He never got to the point of changing around because the audience just booed him off. (personal communication, February 2016)

**Interview question 10.** Interview question 10 asks: What do you do when your audience reacts negatively to a story tell you tell? This question is important in learning how to recover from negative comments in the classroom. The following coding, analysis and findings offer insight.

For interview question 10, five themes were produced. There were three items listed in theme one. There was one listed in theme two. Theme three had two items in it. There was one item listed in both theme four and theme five. The co-reviewers agreed to the coded structure of interview question 10. Nothing was changed. Figure 15 shows the themes coded from interview question 10. There was a precipitous drop between the first theme and the remaining four themes, thus separating the significant view from the trivial many.

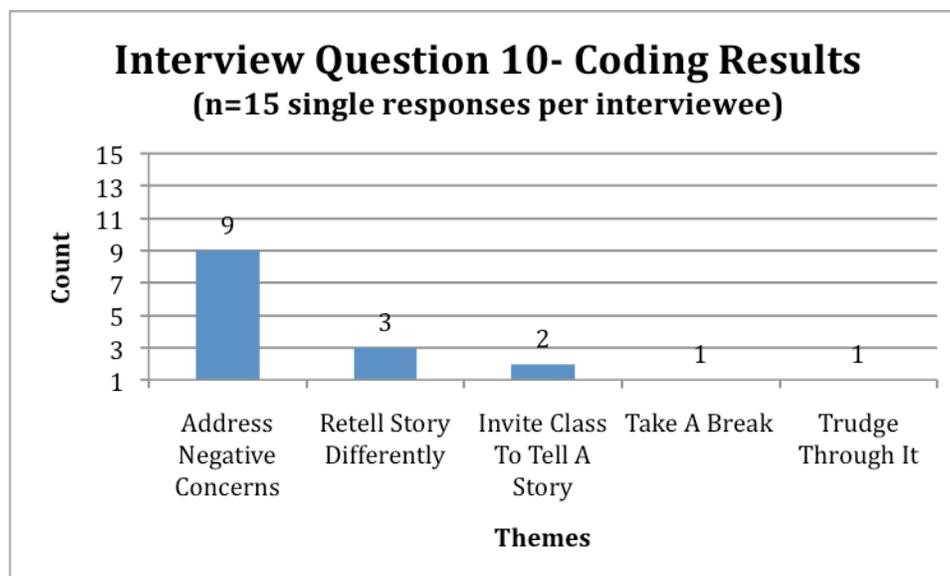


Figure 15. Addressing negative reactions.

**Findings.** After analyzing the data, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 15. These themes represent what storytellers do when their audience reacts negatively to a story they tell: address the negative reactions, retell the story in a different way, invite students to tell their own story, take a short break, and trudge through it. They are listed in descending order from most to least popular ways of addressing negative reactions to stories.

*Address the negative reactions.* Addressing negative reactions deals with storytelling leaders asking questions and figuring out why students reacted negatively to a story. Items in this theme include: address negative reactions and assess what is relatable and learning from students. P14 asks questions for clarity in addressing negative reactions of the students (personal communication, February 2016).

*Retell the story in a different way.* This theme includes finding new ways to present a story. Retelling a story in a different way can allow students to look at a subject from a different angle. As many as 20% of participants felt like this was one of the best approaches to address a negative reaction to a story. P3 shares what he does when his students reacts negatively to a story.

When I am getting a negative reaction from a story, I will stop that story immediately. I will take a moment to calm the audience and find out what they did not get. I will then take another chance at telling the story in a different way. Sometimes that means changing the characters to make it more relatable. Sometimes that means changing the scenarios. Ultimately, I may have to change the story (personal communication, February 2016).

*Invite students to tell their own stories.* This theme includes asking students to tell their own stories as a way of making things more personal. P11 discussed a time where he asked students to tell their own story:

I remember telling a story to a class that just didn't comprehend what I was saying. I was frustrated but I had to try and figure out how to make the subject matter more personal to them. I asked myself if it was something that I can say or do that can cause a bigger buy in. I have to be in tune with them. I decided to ask them to share their own stories around the subject matter. It worked! By sharing their own stories, the students formed a stronger connection to the subject matter. (P11, personal communication, February 2016)

*Take a short break.* This theme involves having the students take a brief break to regroup before coming back to the story. This gives them a way of recharging. "I will give the group a break because their energy might be low especially if it's right before a natural break time or natural lunch" (P7, personal communication, February 2016).

*Trudge through it.* This theme involves the storytelling leader having to continue to tell the story despite negative reactions. Only 6% agreed to this strategy. P9 teaches math and he agreed that sometimes he has to tell a certain story that they may not receive well to explain a

concept. He also talks about how he always follows that story with a sub-story or practical points to help clarify understanding (P9, personal communication, February 2016).

**Research question 3 summary.** In this study, storytelling leaders measured success in storytelling by assessing the extent to which storytelling enhances leadership practice, becoming aware that stories are not resonating with their audience, and reviewing strategies to address students who react negatively to stories. Body language, vocal feedback, emotional brain triggers and assessments proved to be the best ways for participants to evaluate the success of their storytelling in the classroom. Body language was the number one way teachers were able to tell their stories were not resonating with audiences. P10 spoke about looking for emotional brain triggers as a way of measuring success in storytelling. He mentioned how the brain triggers neurons that ultimately produce emotions. When his students become emotionally connected to the story, they usually respond with a certain passion (personal communication, 2016). Kalev (2003) connected these emotions to the middle area of the brain called the limbic system. This is the area that primarily holds emotion, attention and affection-charged memories. Students who are not charged emotionally can become preoccupied.

According to the participants, students would often speak up if there were a disconnection to stories. Addressing the reactions head on was the most popular response to how teachers responded to negative reactions. Retelling the story in a different way and inviting students to tell their own stories were also popular answers among the participants. Only one participant agreed to trudge through the story and tell it despite negative reactions.

## Research Question 4

Research question 4 as previously stated in chapters one and three asks: What recommendations do leaders in education offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool? This research question was key in offering guidance to leaders of tomorrow.

**Interview question 11.** Interview question 11 asks: Knowing what you know now about effective storytelling, what advice would you share with new storytellers? The answers to this interview question yielded advice to leaders who will use stories in the classroom. The following coding, analysis, and findings show the advice given.

For interview question 11, eight themes were compiled. There were eight items listed in theme one. There were six items listed in theme two. Theme three has\d two items in it. Theme four through seven had one item listed in each one. The co-reviewers agreed to the coded structure of interview question 11. Nothing was changed. Figure 16 shows the themes coded from interview question 11. There was a precipitous drop between the first two themes and the remaining five themes, thus separating the significant view from the trivial many.

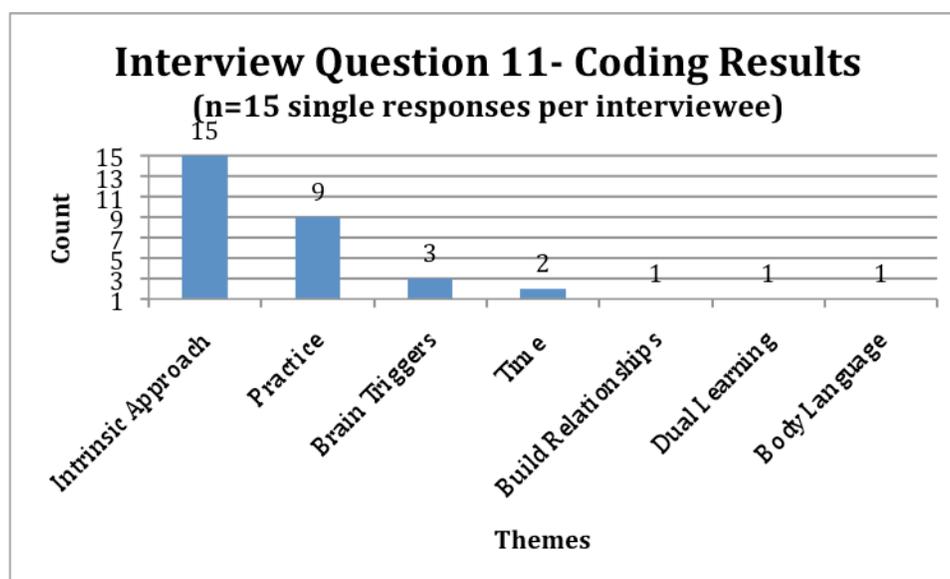


Figure 16. Advice for new storytellers.

**Findings.** After reviewing the data, themes surfaced as noted in Figure 16. These themes represent advice storytelling leaders would share with new storytellers: intrinsic approach, practice your craft, use words that trigger the brain, be time conscious, build relationships, understand learning happens from both the teacher and the student, and use body language. They are listed in descending order from most to least popular advice for new storytelling leaders in education.

*Intrinsic approach.* This theme refers to using inner qualities that can enhance storytelling. Items in this theme were be authentic, be clear, be instinctual, non-judgmental, avoid pity, come from a place of love, be uninhibited and be committed. It is important for storytellers to come from a place of love and wanting to help students when telling stories as opposed to being judgmental. P9 advised:

Future storytelling leaders should come from a place of love and not judgment.

Sometimes a person may want to storytelling out of pity, “thinking poor student” That may not always be the case. It should always come from a place of love. (personal communication, February 2016)

*Practice your craft.* This theme deals with finding ways to practice storytelling. Items in this theme included practice your craft, read books, attend conferences, go to workshops, attend dramas and learn elements of storytelling. P13 advises new storytellers, “Be connected to the arts, whether it’s dance, music, theater. Get connected to leadership books that are about storytelling. Get into the literature” (personal communication, February 2016).

*Use brain trigger words.* This theme includes using words that cause your brain to produce emotions. Items in this theme include brain triggers and humor. According to P14:

I remember an experience that I had teaching 3rd graders. Those kids were wonderful. They had a section of the day called Storytime. Before telling a story one day I asked a series of questions like who remembers a fun time they had with their relatives over the summer. The kids would say “oooooh I do I do!” They would take time telling stories about different things they did with their family members. After hearing their stories I noticed that I had touched on their emotions by asking about family and fun. Family and fun were brain triggers. This was the perfect opportunity to tell my designated story about family vacation adventures and how it promotes learning new things. The students were so involved in the story because they could relate from their own experiences. (personal communication, February 2016)

*Time.* This theme deals with being aware of the time allotted to tell stories. This is important because it informs the storytelling leader on whether or not it is an appropriate time to tell stories. It also lets the storytellers know how long or short the story should be. According to P1, “Storytelling in the classroom is always restricted by a time. Teachers should always be aware of time. I would even suggest practicing your story before entering the class to make sure you don’t exceed your time” (personal communication, February 2016).

*Build relationships.* This theme deals with establishing trust with the audience. The item in this theme includes build relationships to establish trust. P10 talks about building trust as a puppeteer:

Puppets build trust. I try to build trust among my puppets and students at the beginning of class by asking kids to do certain interactions. I remember using my puppets to address a class of 4th graders. To establish trust, the puppet asked one of the kids to help him by tying his show. Not only did that establish trust but it also showed the other kids that it

was okay to engage. For them that's a connector. Once he had his shoelaces tied, Tevin (my puppet) introduced himself and said today we are going to talk about XYZ. The students were engaged and trusting at this point because they saw Tevin as a person that has to tie his shoes like they do. (personal communication, February, 2016)

*Understand two-way learning.* This theme deals with storytelling leaders understanding that when telling stories, both teacher and students learn. Learning happens for all parties involved. Storytelling leaders should approach storytelling with an openness to learn. P10 stated:

Storytelling consists of a dual learning process. Future leaders need to be open to learning from the students as well. My advice would be to explore many different styles of storytelling. Find methods that make you the most comfortable with learning as well as teaching through stories. (personal communication, February 2016)

*Body language.* This theme deals with being aware of nonverbal feedback when telling stories. P7 talks about the importance of recognizing body language:

Storytellers need to learn how to communicate words without speaking as well as read the body language of students. I believe that body language is a real critical component of communication and as you are telling a story you need to pay attention to how people are interacting with you on that level. If a story is not working, you should be able to tell it fairly quickly. What's critical is that nonverbal feedback when another human being is not interested in what you are saying. Their body language is really clear. Learning body language is one of the first steps in becoming an excellent communicator and storyteller. (personal communication, February 2016)

**Research question 4 summary.** In this study, storytelling leaders considered advice to offer to new storytellers. The research showed that most participants believe storytellers should

practice intrinsic approaches like being non-judgmental. Storytellers should eradicate all preconceived notions about their audience when telling stories. P9 felt that future storytelling leaders “should speak from a place of love and not judgment” (personal communication, February 2016). Another intrinsic quality discussed was being authentic. Kaye and Jacobson (1999) mentioned how authenticity includes being truthful about mistakes, failures and derailments. Showing this type of vulnerability in being authentic can cause students to invoke their own intellect and become motivated to search for causes and better approaches to solving their own problems. Participants also thought that new storytellers should practice their craft by attending dramas, workshops and conferences. A small number of participants felt that storytellers should be time conscious or recognize body language.

### **Chapter Summary**

The data for this study was collected as a part of a study to determine effective best practice strategies and challenges for leaders in education who use storytelling, how leaders who use storytelling as a leadership practice measure their success, and what recommendations leaders in education can offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool. This qualitative study spotlighted professional insight of storytelling leaders in education by capturing the essence of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). There was a semi-structured interview protocol to collect the data for each interview. To ensure diversity, participants were recruited using maximum variation considering age, K-12 and college teaching experience and diverse storytelling background. A sum of 15 participants ultimately contributed to this study. A list of interview questions was created that aligned with the four research questions in this study. The semi-structured interview questions were reviewed by co-reviewers and validated before being used to reduce inherent biases. For further clarity, the questions were

then asked to an individual who met the criteria for participants to be interviewed. A transcription was developed after the interviews were conducted. Coding followed. Major general themes emerged that coincided with the research questions.

Research question one asked: What strategies and practices do leaders in education who use storytelling employ? As a result of coding, five major themes emerged as strategies and practices; four about how stories are incorporated; four as inspirations; and three themes emerged as the source of storytelling. First, the five major themes that emerged as strategies and practices were: knowledge transfer, relatable, trust, engagement and emotional intelligence. The major themes related to how stories are incorporated were: before the lesson, throughout the lesson, in the middle of the lesson and at the end of the lesson. Subsequently, the themes that surfaced as inspirations were: curriculum, human experience, demographic and student questions. The themes associated with the sources of storytelling were: other people's stories, their own stories, made-up stories.

Research question two asks: What challenges do leaders in education face when incorporating storytelling in their leadership practice? At the completion of the coding process, four major themes emerged as classroom elements needed for effective storytelling, three major themes spoke of the downside to storytelling and four major themes clarified significant challenges in storytelling. First, the four major themes that pertained to classroom elements needed for effective storytelling were: trust, environment, cultural competency and time. In addition, the three major themes observed when discussing significant challenges in storytelling were: telling the wrong stories, distractions and the wrong person telling stories. The four major themes of significant challenges in storytelling were: telling the right stories, cultural barriers, timing, and institutional constraints.

Research question three asks: How do leaders who use storytelling as a leadership practice measure their success? Resoundingly, four major themes emerged as measurable extents to which stories enhance leadership practices, three major themes served as awareness indicators that stories are not resonating and five major themes recommended actions to negative reactions in the audience. First, the major themes that emerged as measurable extents to which stories enhance leadership practices were: body language, vocal feedback, emotional brain triggers and assessments. Moreover, the major themes that emerged as awareness indicators that stories are not resonating were: body language, preoccupied and vocal acknowledgement. The major themes that emerged as recommended actions to negative reactions to stories were: address negative concerns, retell story differently, invite students to tell their own story, take a break and trudge through it.

Research question four asks: What recommendations do leaders in education offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool? At the completion of the coding process seven major themes were observed as recommendations for future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool. The major themes that emerged were: intrinsic approach, practice your craft, use brain trigger words, time conscious, build relationships, understand two-way learning, and body language.

The findings were displayed as visual data with charts showing each theme that represented each interview question. Each interview question was aligned with the four research questions. The correlation between the interview questions and research questions are explored in the next chapter. The next chapter discusses the findings, suggestions for future research, and the conclusion of the study.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

Since the beginning of time, stories have played a trailblazing role in transferring knowledge as an effective teaching strategy with Homo Sapiens. People began connecting sound to ideas, which eventually matriculated into formalized language that became stories (Hamilton, 2010). As far as 15,000 B.C. the Lascaux Caves had drawings that offered hunting practices and rituals, showing the rich tradition of the power of written stories (Benjamin, 2006).

Throughout history, stories have served the purpose of conveying life lessons in learning. From the tales of Mesopotamia in the Epic of Gilgamesh to Aesop's Fables, stories have proven to be imperative in passing along strategies and practices for living. From the plays of William Shakespeare to the sermons of Jesus Christ, authors have used famous icons in stories to express allegorical contexts for practical living. Thousands of years of the narrative tradition have shaped the understanding of listeners. Even today, storytelling is important in playing a part in the economic ascension of the working class.

In today's education system, stories are a key factor in keeping the attention of students, which contributes to classroom retention ("Why Teens Drop Out of School," 2008). It is the teachers' job to use effective teaching strategies to help students learn. The review of literature for this study contends that when students receive effective teaching strategies they stay in school, choose higher quality colleges and are more competitive in entering the workplace after graduating from a college or university (Robicheaux, 2011). This competitiveness can cause graduates to enter the jobs at higher salaries.

The goal of the study was to isolate challenges and determine effective best practice strategies for leaders in education who use storytelling, to note how leaders measure success in using storytelling as a leadership practice, and to compile recommendations that leaders in

education could offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool. As a result of this study, a number of best practices surfaced. This chapter addresses a summary of the results, findings of the study, implications and future direction. This study sought to address four specific research questions:

1. What strategies and practices do leaders in education who use storytelling employ?
2. What challenges do leaders in education who use storytelling in their leadership practice face?
3. How do leaders who use storytelling as a leadership practice measure their success?
4. What recommendations do leaders in education offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool?

### **Summary of Results**

Storytelling is an effective strategy that helps students learn (Buch & Wolff, 2000). All leaders in education have the potential to be excellent storytellers. There are best practices that can provide a solid roadmap for being a storytelling leader in education. These best practices surfaced as a result of the study, thereby confirming that storytelling is indeed an effective strategy for learning in education.

Trust is one of the main components of storytelling as an effective teaching strategy. Stories are very powerful and they impact audiences in distinct ways after trust is built. They serve as a teaching tool for whatever lessons that need to be taught by informing the listener through painting a vivid picture of the lesson (Kay & Jacobson, 1999). Along with informing students it entertains, influences and uplifts after trust has been established. It is absolutely essential that trust is established for storytelling to be effective.

Quite naturally, one of the first points that came out in this study was teachers building trust among students. As a result of analysis, it was clear that effective storytelling is not only about telling a good story to transfer knowledge, but also building trust. Students must have enough trust in the classroom to fully relate to stories told and to connect with the lesson and the instructor. As a result of this study, it has been determined that there are inspirations that call for certain stories to be told at certain times. In some cases storytelling may not be the most appropriate thing to do. For example, when students are working productively in group-think situations, teachers would need to either wait until the group collaborative have finished or postpone stories altogether (P5, personal communication, February 2016).

In learning what works best in storytelling, it is inevitable that challenges will occur. Storytelling leaders must realize how to overcome challenges in the most effective way. Overcoming challenges leads to success (Collison & Mackenzie, 1999). Along with challenges come successes. Future storytellers need to learn how to measure success based on key indicators such as body responses, feedback, and assessments. Mastering the practice of storytelling may take time. In the interim, storytelling leaders urge future storytellers to practice their craft by attending plays, conferences, workshops and other events that promote storytelling. They also need to research literature that provides insight on diverse approaches to telling stories. All of the aforementioned are reviewed in the following results.

**Findings.** The overall findings of this study support the research questions. The themes that were formed from participant answers aligned with the literature review in most cases; in particular, Morgan and Dennehy (1997) mentions key purposes of storytelling:

- Build trust: stories build trust among all parties involved.

- Knowledge transfer values and ideas: stories help express what's important from the storyteller to the listeners.
- Engagement: stories encourage engagement allowing others to pull from their own experiences and contribute to the conversation. (p.39)

All of these concepts are themes in that came out in this study. In contrast, there were a couple of unusual findings that did not quite align with the literature. A descriptive analysis of this information is outlined in the following findings.

*Strategies and practices that storytelling leaders in education employ.* The sine qua non of this study focused on strategies and practices that storytelling leaders in education employ. The descriptions were rich and thick. The findings of interview questions one through four aligned with research question one, which asks about storytelling practices in education. In subsequent order it was discovered that educators expressed

- Knowledge transfer
- Relatability
- Trust
- Engagement
- Emotional intelligence

All of these themes were recommended as roles that storytelling play in their leadership practice. In particular, 86% of participants agreed that their stories are relatable because it helps them to identify with their students. P10 is a puppeteer, and he uses his puppets to help students learn. For instance, he mentioned how he often creates a scenario to build trust and be more relatable among his students when they are first introduced to the puppet. One of the primary things the puppet notices is that his shoelaces is untied. The puppet then asks one of the children if he or

she would help him by tying his shoe. A student volunteer is usually happy to go up and assist in tying the puppet's shoelaces. The puppet engages in conversation with the student volunteer while the shoe is tied. A level of comfort is established. P10 talked about how the act of helping the puppet with his shoes builds trust among students. First, students can relate shoes laces being untied. Second, students see how one student is interacting with the puppet and it makes them more comfortable to do the same. These findings support the review of literature on how stories are relatable in storytelling. According to C. James and Minnis (2004) stories bring clarity by stimulating images that are relatable to personal experiences. As a result, a connection is made between the storyteller and the audience. Connections are also made from the placement of stories in a classroom.

Storytelling leaders agreed that stories should be told at the beginning of class to introduce a lesson. The majority also felt that stories should be told throughout a classroom session. Only 6% of participants felt that stories should be told in the middle of class. Additionally, only 6% thought that stories should be told at the end. All participants interviewed agreed that the inspiration for stories was just as important as the placement.

Curriculum, human experience, demographic, and student questions all emerged as themes of inspiration for stories. Demographic includes looking at the differences among students in a classroom. P8 recounts the experience of teaching an English Language Learner's class where the ages ranged from 19 to 87. The inspiration for her stories came from deciphering what her students could relate to. For example, she couldn't reference young pop stars that are relevant today and expect the 87-year-old student to know who she was talking about. Participant eight also had to figure out the sources of stories to tell to her audience.

As many as 93% of participants stated that they told other people's stories as their source. In close percentile, 86% of participants told their own stories to students as a source. There was a precipitous drop between the first two percentages and the final category of answers. Only 20% of participants admitted to making up stories. The importance of telling stories aligns with review of literature regarding Malcolm Knowles' adult learning theory, specifically learner's experience (Knowles et al., 2012). Storytelling allows the audience to hear stories that causes them to relate to their own experiences, which ultimately encourages learning (Harris & Barnes, 2006). Beyond the strategies and practices, the participants produced some interesting results about the challenges they face in storytelling.

***Challenges that storytelling leaders in education face.*** Storytelling leaders in education understand that in order to become successful they must address challenges that may arise in their leadership practice. The findings of interview questions five through seven aligned with research question two, which asks about challenges that storytelling leaders face. The challenges are listed subsequently.

- Classroom elements
- Distractions
- Curriculum

Special attention must be given to classroom elements for optimal effectiveness in storytelling. In addressing the challenges of storytelling, participants first commented on elements that needed to be in place for storytelling to be effective. P13 talks about how she positions the desks in the classroom in a circle when telling stories. She also sits along the circle as opposed to inside the circle to show her students that they are all there to learn from each other. She does this to promote a sense of community in the class while a story is being told.

This notion aligns with the review of literature. Kaye and Jacobson (1999) mention how the environment allows stories to create a strong sense of community among storytellers and students. A lack of appropriate environment can indeed be a detriment to storytelling.

Distractions were found to be major challenges. In particular, distractions include telling the wrong story, and the wrong person telling stories. Both are detrimental to the storytelling experience. Participant four feels that the students can be blatantly disrespectful when distracting themselves during some of his stories. He stated how one of his challenges is not appearing to tell stories that are biased and in favor of his personal beliefs. He admittedly gets passionate about telling stories of equality because he has endured so much heartache in being discriminated against as a person of color. Sometimes when his students feel like he is being biased in storytelling, they will tune out by purposely finding and engaging in distractions. He's seen students put on headphones while he is in the middle of telling stories. Participant four says, "Engaging in that type of self-distracting way of tuning me out is one of the most disrespectful things a student can do" (personal communication, February 2016).

P6 teaches professional speech and debate to college students. He recalls a time when a Caucasian student was telling a story of struggle as a Black man. It was not received well by African American students and faculty because they felt that he was the wrong person to tell that particular story. African American students in particular didn't believe the Caucasian student had the right to speak on this racial issue as an African American character in a story, especially considering contemporary injustices happening to minorities in the United States.

P9 cited the curriculum as one of his biggest challenges to storytelling. He teaches math and argues that there is little to no time for storytelling because so many concepts have to be learned each day. He also talks about how students come into the classroom with a preconceived

notion about math. “Students are intimidated when they walk in the class so I have to adjust prep time at the beginning of class and follow-up at the end of class to make time for storytelling” (P9, personal conversations, February 2016). He also had to work hard at debunking preconceived notions about math.

*How storytelling leaders measure their success.* Success indicators are important in realizing whether a story is an effective teaching strategy. The findings of interview questions eight through ten aligned with research question three, which asks about how storytelling leaders measure their success. In addition to talking about the challenges of storytelling it was imperative for the participants in the study to discuss how they measured the successes of storytelling. The following were mentioned in subsequent order:

- Body language
- Vocal feedback
- Emotional brain triggers
- Assessments

As subpoints for emotional brain triggers the following items were called out: emotions, feelings and critical thinking. All of these measures of success factors are found in the limbic system in the neuroscience of the brain. This aligns with the review of literature (Kazlev, 2003). Paul Maclean described the brain in three parts. The first part is the reptile brain, which is responsible for instinctual survival behaviors. The second part of the brain is the limbic system, which is where emotions are housed. The third part of the brain is the neo-cortex, which consists of right and left hemispheres. The right hemisphere controls the creative part of the brain and the left hemisphere controls the logical structured part of the brain (Kazlev, 2003). Emotional brain

triggers start in the limbic system, which is the source of emotions (Kazlev, 2003). Along with successes participants determined how their stories were not resonating with their classes.

Participants noted being preoccupied, body language and vocal acknowledgment as primary indicators that their stories were not resonating with their audience. A lack of eye contact was noted by 13% of the participants. Participant seven mentioned that his students' eyes usually follow him around the room when he's telling stories. When their eyes are not following him, he realizes there is a disconnection.

Another indicator of a story not resonating is a negative response. The majority of participants said that they would handle a negative response by addressing the negative reactions. Thirteen percent of the participants stated that they will ask the students to tell their own stories in addressing negative responses. Allowing students to tell their own stories builds the buy-in. Participants often share childhood stories. Sharing such stories is an effective way to get students involved in a conversation. Paquette (2013) connects the telling of childhood stories to adult learning theory's learner experience and motivation; hearing childhood stories causes audiences to pull from their own childhood stories. As a result, a connection is formed and trust is built. Audiences began to feel more comfortable in contributing to conversation and engagement occurs. Paquette contends that telling childhood stories helps the audience to recall events that happened in a certain space and time, which in turn are relatable to what's currently being discussed. Storytelling ultimately becomes a motivation for learning in adult learning theory (Paquette, 2013).

In addition to the aforementioned findings that aligned with research question two, Participant nine expressed an unusual insight as a tactic for what to do when an audience is reacting negatively to a story. He mentioned that in some cases teachers should just "trudge

through it and tell the story anyway.” P9 justifies this by saying that there are some things that students have to learn, whether or not they want. In contradiction to the literature review, research supports finding ways to express how a story is told in transferring knowledge to students (Benjamin, 2006). According to the research, if the same message can still be conveyed effectively through a different story the current story being told is not reaching an audience.

### **Implications**

The implications of this study are divided into two categories. The first category is practice, which highlights different groups of people who may be interested these findings. The second category is theory and research, which discusses how the findings align with the theoretical frameworks in the literature review.

#### **Implications for practice.**

*Implications for storytelling coaches.* There is great significance in the findings of this study for storytelling coaches. As human resources managers go through the task of training global business leaders they can have this study as an additional resource. Storytelling Coaches could go into organizations and offer storytelling methods as a way of coaching high-level managers on how to communicate with teams. Coaches could make observe how participants used stories from their own personal lives to build relationships. P4 says:

I believe that by telling stories, some from my own past that it creates more of an interpersonal relationship with students. It opens them up to understanding that I am just like them. I have frailties and faults. I was a student who didn't always do well. And that makes them feel like they have a roadmap for success right in front of them (personal communication, February 2016).

In reading insight from this study, coaches could encourage high-level managers to open up and be more vulnerable as a way of showing their own humanity and building trust.

*Implications for educators.* The findings from this study can be used by different groups of people interested in this subject. Future teachers who are looking for strategies in teaching may refer to this study to gain best practices for helping students to learn through storytelling. For example, new English Language Learner teachers can use this study to get an idea of what the differences they would need to be aware of in the classroom. Participant eight teaches students who speak English as a Second language (ESL). It is important for her students to practice their English in the classroom. P8 uses stories as a vehicle for her students to learn English. The stories told in the classroom are associated with daily routines of her students. Participant eight says:

My stories are inspired by common themes and occurrences that happen in my students' everyday lives. They are inspired by grocery shopping, bill paying, school contacts where ESL students have kids in school. If their kids have any problems in school my students need to be able to communicate with the leadership of that school. It could be for communication at their job. I had a student who would get off work late at night but there was no light provided at the exit so it became a safety issue. So my student wanted to know how they could communicate to have lights installed to their employer. Everyday activities are what inspire these stories (personal communication, February 2016).

Future leaders in education that will teach English language learners can use this study as a template for the types of stories that can be told in the classroom.

Storytelling leaders may also learn ways to practice the craft of storytelling. For example, through reading the findings from research question four, they may realize the importance of seeing live performances and begin attending theater productions.

***Implications for managers.*** Managers in the workplace may use this study to help employees adapt to change through storytelling. In an article in the *Harvard Business Review*, Fryer (2003) talks about two types of ways managers motivate employees towards change. He contends that the first way is through conventional rhetoric. This category includes a PowerPoint presentation and a statement of what the challenges are and what is needed for the company to prosper (Fryer, 2003). The second way to motivate people in persuading them to change is through storytelling. Fryer (2003) argues that this is the more powerful way of effectively influencing employees. This notion aligns with the review of literature. Kaye and Jacobson (1999) stated that stories could be used to persuade through influencing individuals towards future possibilities. Working adults are motivated through storytelling because hearing stories can help them recall their own stories. Recalling their own stories can increase the buy-in a company's new vision. In the literature review, Barker and Gower (2010) discuss how storytelling is important in helping employees on a global platform recall their own experiences in understanding organizations and their future directions. The recalling of employees' experiences aligns with Malcolm Knowles' learner experience in the adult learning theoretical framework (Knowles et al., 2012).

**Implications for theory and research.**

***Bloom's taxonomy.*** In this section, Bloom's taxonomy is explored. The taxonomy lists levels of learning in a hierarchical system of cognitive categories from lowest to highest (Bloom, 1956). In ascending order, these levels include knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Flynn et al. (2004) defines effective teaching strategies as utilizing higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, which allows students to go beyond simply recalling information. Athanassiou et al. (2003) confirms that storytelling is an effective strategy because of its ability to help an audience use analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The findings in this study

align with this theoretical framework. In particular, participant six helps his speech and debate class to analyze and synthesize controversial topics to broaden their thinking. For example, he explained that some of his students are a part of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community. Participant six encourages those students to express themselves through storytelling certain scenarios so that the other students in the classroom can analyze the issues surrounding the LGBT community to reduce marginalizing in the classroom. Another theoretical framework is adult learning theory.

***Adult learning theory.*** Malcolm Knowles mentions how the learner's experience and motivation are parts of adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2012). Storytelling aligns with adult learning theory because it motivates and helps learners to pull from their own experiences to ultimately produce learning (Paquette, 2013). Participant five teaches comparative religion in higher education. She says:

A primary focus in my classroom is sharing biblical stories. A large part of my class is having the students to share their own stories. They come from diverse religious backgrounds. Sharing their stories helps them to form a connection through trust. The acceptance of their stories by the other students takes away feelings of being judged. As a result learning begins to take place. (personal communication, February 2016)

The neuroscience of the brain is a third theoretical framework that aligns with the findings of this study.

***Neuroscience.*** The neuroscience of the brain is made up of three distinct parts (Kazlev, 2003). First is the reptile brain that is focused on survival. Second is the limbic system, which connects your emotions. Third is the neocortex, which connects the logical (left) and creative (right) parts of the brain. According to a significant number of participants interviewed, stories

touch on the emotions of its listeners that lead to trust. P10 mentioned that storytelling causes neurons to send signals that produce emotional responses that connect to what they are hearing. These connecting feelings can build trust in the classroom (P10, personal communication, February 2016).

### **Researcher's Observations**

In a study like this, it is important for considerations to be made from a multiplicity of angles. Due diligence, visual formatting, self-reflection and personal impact were all inner dialogues going through the researcher's mind before, during and after this study. First he wanted to make sure that he was making a difference in the actual field of storytelling. Given the fact that he had his own personal background in storytelling a heightened respect for the field had been developed. There had to be some contributions made to through this study to make it all worth it. Second his personal belief is that there should be creativity and innovation incorporated in all oral and written presentation. There was a major need to make this study lively, giving it the "umph" that would peak the interest of any reader. Next, he wanted to make sure he learned from this study. As a practitioner of storytelling there is always room for improvement. Finally he wanted to impact future storytellers leaders who wanted to get a grasp of best practices in diverse industries. All of these points were important to him. In his own personal self-reflection, he realized the need for these elements to be in place. Weis and Fine (2000) argue that it is important to reflect on critical conscious points in qualitative writings. The researcher aligned his reflection with what Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) identify as four assessment criteria:

1. Substantive contribution
2. Aesthetic Merit
3. Reflexivity

#### 4. Impact

##### **Substantive Contribution**

Substantive contribution pertains to reflecting on whether the study contributed to an understanding of the actual subject matter (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). In this case, the study contributed to the impact of storytelling in education for many reasons. One main reason was the idea of universal practices in storytelling. There was professional input from leaders in education that had diverse backgrounds and world experiences in storytelling. Some of the diverse participants included a judge, pastor, television actor, speech and debate coach, professional dancer, and a traveling puppeteer. All 15 participants interviewed had different storytelling backgrounds but used some of the same storytelling practices in the classroom. An example is telling other people's stories. The majority of participants agreed to the telling of other people's stories when teaching lessons. This proved that there are universal concepts to storytelling that contributes to learning.

##### **Aesthetic Merit**

Aesthetic Merit looks at whether the study is artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). It became evident that the study was artistically shaped by the diversity of participants interviewed and the input that was given from them. P11 is a television actor. As an artist he talks about how his stories in the classroom are shaped by his experiences on the television with his scenes and off the television set with interaction with producers.

## **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity deals with the self-awareness and exposure that results as a consequence of the study (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). One of the participants teaches Comparative Religion in higher education. She says:

My job as an educator is to tell the stories but let people find their stories. Every person in the classroom is a micro universe. They have their stories. As an educator I focus on storytelling but it's the students' stories that really brings out the lessons in the classroom. (P5, personal communication, February 2016)

The interview session with P5 generated reflection within the researcher on storytelling practices in learning environments. He realized that there was a lack of focus on bringing out the stories of the students in the classroom. With feelings of enlightenment, he is now going to make a conscious effort to focus on the stories of his students when teaching.

## **Impact**

Impact deals with the effect that the study had on the researcher. It looks at whether there is an inclination to try new research practices or take some sort of action (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). After conducting this study, following action will be taken:

- Attend more storytelling events to practice his craft
- Introduce more controversial issues in storytelling to provoke thought and participation
- Be more observant when telling stories to look for success indicators
- Be more aware of gaps in the classroom that can cause marginalization among students
- Take a deeper look at the impact of adult learning theory and it's relation to storytelling
- Make a formal connection between storytelling and the neuroscience of the brain

## **Future Directions**

The purpose of this study was to reveal best practices of storytelling leaders in education and reveal recommendations for future storytellers. Although this topic has been researched and studied, there are plenty of recommendations for further research opportunities that would encourage others to study storytelling. This study was limited to 15 participants who were all storytellers in education. They each had interesting storytelling backgrounds. Based on the literature, the data, and the observations of the researcher's own experience, the following future opportunities for further research in storytelling is recommended.

### **Conducting a study on storytelling and an in-depth connection to neuroscience.**

Nguyen (2014) talks about four types of happy chemicals released by the brain. First is dopamine, which motivates people to take actions towards goals and needs while reinforcing pleasure. Second is serotonin, which helps people to feel significant and important. Depression decreases when serotonin increases. Third is oxytocin, which creates intimacy, trust and builds relationships. Finally endorphins are released in response to pain and depression. They help to get rid of anxiety and depression. Endorphins are induced through regular exercise and laughter (Nguyen, 2014). Researchers can do a study connecting the types of stories that release dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphins.

**Conducting a comparative study on the impact of childhood stories in an andragogical setting versus a pedagogical setting.** Children may or may not react to a childhood stories with more intensity as adults. Adults who recall childhood stories may be more removed because of the time lapse.

**Conducting a study on the impact of a curriculum that allows time and encourages storytelling versus a curriculum that does not.** P9 in this study teaches math. He complained

that one of the biggest challenges is the curriculum. The curriculum did not allow enough time for the storytelling process to take place. It is especially hard for P9 because he uses stories to debunk preconceived notions children have about math. Researchers could dive in this study with the hopes of impacting district standards and policies with more allotted time for creative activities like storytelling in subjects such as math and science (P9, personal communication, February 2016).

**Conducting a study on the impact of crisis management storytelling.** All industries go through crises. The review of literature in this study confirms that storytelling is useful in organizations because it devises anecdotal plots to dealing with issues in the presence of disruptive occurrences (Kopp et al., 2011).

**Conducting a study on the effects of storytelling on mental illness.** In this study participants use storytelling to calm students when they first walk in a classroom. Researchers could examine storytelling as a calming effect on mentally ill patients. NAMI-Yolo (n.d.), a chapter of NAMI, the nation's voice on mental illness, offers tips for families with mental illness. Their tips include allowing mental ill family members to express their dreams and goals and expressing them in daily steps. Researchers could explore the use of stories in helping mentally ill family members build step-by-step life goals.

**Conducting a comparative study on the effects of storytelling among generations in the workplace and in the classroom.** Participants in this study talked about having to tell relatable stories to people in different age groups. A workplace environment could consist of younger employees who are just starting off and older employees that are about to retire. Their value systems are different. The younger employee could be focusing on family and building a life. On the other hand, the older employee could be focusing on retirement and future travels.

Because of generational gaps in the workplace it is essential for storytelling to be relatable to all parties involved. Researchers could study the types of stories that could be told to connect all generations involved in the workplace.

**Conducting a study of storytelling best practices for marginalization reduction in the classroom and in the workplace.** The research in this study confirms that stories connect students from different cultures by encouraging lived experiences (Jehangir, 2010). These lived experiences allow students to grasp a deeper understanding of themselves and each other. Researchers could study this same impact in corporations and nonprofit organizations among culturally diverse employees.

**Best practices of storytelling among veterans with PTSD.** Elements Behavioral Health (n.d.) mentions benefits to storytelling among veterans who suffer with PTSD. One benefit is the increase of self-control. When veterans share their stories they are taking control of what happened to them. Another benefit is the release of stress and strong emotions by venting. Finally, listeners of storytelling veterans who suffer from PTSD are able to provide support and interaction. Researchers can take a deeper dive into this subject and study the best practices of storytelling veterans with PTSD.

### **Final Thoughts**

Storytelling is paving the way for future leaders in education as an effective teaching strategy. The findings from this study show that best practices in storytelling can serve many purposes in maintaining a productive learning environment. These practices allow new and leaders in education the opportunity to use storytelling as teaching strategy to impact students in both K-12 and higher education platforms. P4 reiterates the impact of storytelling in the classroom:

Our students excel in our classes and their other classes because of the training and exposure they receive in being storytellers. Our students transfer from our community colleges to universities at greater rates than the rest other departments at the college. They are more engaged in that they are actually active on campus and connecting with faculty in ways that students in other programs do. Student engagement, course completion and transfer rates are all at higher averages with our students because of the training that they receive in storytelling. They are transformed not just by the storytelling but the training and learning of how to do it and become storytellers themselves (personal communication, February 2016).

This study also contributes to the body of research by connecting storytelling to adult learning theory and neuroscience. As a result, further opportunities for new studies on storytelling in different areas like business, social enterprise, and healthcare can be explored. At the end of this study, the researcher was proud of the work done in this study and excited about the overwhelming amount of insight he got from the participants that were interviewed. It was confirmed that telling stories is a powerful way of building trust, being relatable, and transferring knowledge. As history has proven since the earliest recollection of communication, storytelling is always a great strategy for learning. Storytelling is powerful across global industries; indeed, the hope is that this study will encourage readers to investigate storytelling and use it in multiple settings as a powerful source for impacting the world.

In closing I am reminded of the time when I was in Pisa, Italy, on stage about to sing the aria I had been practicing all summer long. The curtains went up and I stepped to the center of the stage. I closed my eyes and opened my mouth, but surprisingly, nothing came out. I began to shake in nervousness and frustration. When I opened my eyes I saw

everyone while at the same time seeing no one. All of a sudden I spotted my maestro.

With the biggest smile on her face, she said, “sing the story.” I suddenly remembered the passion I had for the song because of the storyline. This passion was embedded in my heart. And just like that, I sang the story. As the audience began to clap at the end of my performance, I couldn’t help but to think about the power of storytelling.

Storytelling is about bringing to life to what’s in your heart. It’s the only way to truly sing the story.

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## APPENDIX A

## Research Questions and Interview Questions

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
1. What strategies and practices do leaders in education who use storytelling employ?	1. What role does storytelling play in your leadership practice?  2. How do you incorporate storytelling in your leadership practice?  3. As an educational leader, what inspires your stories?  4. What are the main sources of the stories you use to support your leadership practice?
2. What challenges do leaders in education who use storytelling in their leadership practice face?	5. What elements need to be in place in the classroom for storytelling to be effective?  6. Is there a downside in using stories in your leadership practice?  7. As a storyteller what are the most significant challenges in your leadership journey?
3. How do leaders who use storytelling as a leadership practice measure their success?	8. How do you assess the extent to which storytelling enhances your leadership practice?  9. How do you become aware your stories aren't resonating with your audience?  10. What do you do when your audience reacts negativity to a story tell your tell?
4. What recommendations do leaders in education offer to future leaders who want to use storytelling as a leadership tool?	11. Knowing what you know now about effective storytelling, what advice would you share with new storytellers?

**APPENDIX B****Informed Consent Form****PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY****Graduate School of Education and Psychology****INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES****BEST STORYTELLING PRACTICES IN EDUCATION**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. Calvin Bonds, Ed.D .Candidate, at Pepperdine University, because he is the principal investigator approved by faculty advisor Dr. Farzin Madjidi. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for you records.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to assess best practices of leaders in education who use storytelling.

**STUDY PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Give the researcher at most an hour of your time. (The interview will take about 45 minutes)
- Meet at a location that is convenient for you
- Answer questions related to storytelling in the classroom.

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study include:

- Answers from interview will be stored in a password protected Gmail account. Anything stored could potential be hacked into.
- Talking about stories could psychologically cause you to recall memories that could be uncomfortable.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There are no direct benefits for you; however, anticipated benefits to society include:

- Informing current educators with ideas on how to incorporate stories in the classroom as a teaching strategy.
- Empowering future educators with best practices of telling stories before entering the classroom.
- Helping students connect to other students and teachers inside the classroom.

### **PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION**

You will receive a \$6 Starbucks gift card for your time. You do not have to answer all of the questions in order to receive the card. The card will be given to you when you return the questionnaire.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I will keep your records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

There will be no identifiable information obtained in connection with this study. Your name, address or other identifiable information will not be collected. The data will be stored in a password protected Gmail account on a computer in the principal investigators place of residence. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years. The data collected will be coded, transcribed and placed into themes for data analysis. During the transcription process the data will be released to a third party transcriber excluding your identity. The transcriber will transcribe the data and send it back to the researcher. All audio recordings will be used for educational purposes and will be deleted immediately after the study is completed.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

**ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION**

Your alternative is to not participate. Your relationship with your employer will not be affected whether you participate or not in this study.

**EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR**

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury

**INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Calvin Bonds at [REDACTED] and/or [REDACTED] if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500, Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

## APPENDIX C

## IRB Approval



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

**NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH**

Date: February 12, 2016

Protocol Investigator Name: Calvin Bonds

Protocol #: 15-10-096

Project Title: Storytelling in Leadership

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Calvin Bonds:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chairperson

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives