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Pepperdine University  
The Graduate School of Education and Psychology

STORYTELLING STRATEGIES FOR LEADING CHANGE IN UNIVERSITY  
PRESTIGE

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

by

Matthew T. Paden

December, 2011

L. Hyatt, Ed.D. — Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Matthew T. Paden

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

Doctoral Committee:

L. Hyatt, Ed.D., Chairperson

June Schmieder-Ramirez, Ph.D.

J. L. Fortson, Ed.D.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Kagney, my daughter Zaylee, my parents Tim and Metta Paden, my in-laws Kendon and Jackie Zahn, and each of my sisters and brothers. While my name is on this dissertation, it is unquestioned that the arrival at this point in my story is only by the grace of God, and because He has blessed me with a family and friends who have been supportive, encouraging, and willing to travel this road alongside me.

Kagney, you alone have seen the best and worst of me through this doctoral journey. You have sacrificed so much in order for us to pursue this vision. You have been my rock, my biggest fan, and tireless in your commitment to seeing me through completion. I am eternally grateful for your love, mercy, and willingness to allow me to dream grand dreams. I love you and look forward to the future chapters of our story as we chase our future and pursue His purposes together.

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Mom and Dad, I am so grateful for my heritage, and for the example that you both have been to me of what it means to work hard, live right, and believe in something greater than yourself. Thank you Mom and Dad, your impact on my life provides the foundation for all that I am and hope to be.

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## VITA

## EDUCATION

Doctorate of Education, Organizational Leadership

Pepperdine University, 2008–2011

*U.S. Ambassador Glen and Gloria Holden Scholarship, 2009*

*Associated Women of Pepperdine Scholarship, 2010*

*Doctorate in Education, Organizational Leadership Faculty Scholarship, 2010*

Master of Science, Bible and Ministry

Lubbock Christian University, 2002–2004

*Athletic Department Graduate Assistant Scholarship, 2002–2004*

Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies, Secondary Education

Lubbock Christian University, 1998–2002

*Trustees' Award, Who's Who, Kappa Delta Pi, NAIA Academic All-American, SAC Academic All-Conference*

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director,

University Advancement and Alumni Relations,  
Lubbock Christian University,

2010-present

Development Officer,

Lubbock Christian University,

2008–2010

Dean,

Campus Life,  
Lubbock Christian University,

2007–2008

Assistant Men's Basketball Coach,

Lubbock Christian University,

2002–2007

## ABSTRACT

Universities across the United States desire to enhance their level of institutional prestige in order to recruit top students, hire outstanding faculty members, and increase financial support. The purpose of this study is to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. This qualitative study utilized the Dynamic Narrative Approach in conducting interviews to collect data from university leaders whose titles included president, provost-vice president, and academic dean. The interview instrument consisted of semistructured questions, was reviewed for validity by a panel of experts, and was administered through the use of technology. A review and synthesis of the literature provided the constructs for a conceptual framework. A combination of the literature and the research findings produced a model of Storytelling Strategies for Leading Change in University Prestige. The data gathered and analyzed yielded 3 themes that served as a framework for using storytelling as a strategy for leading change in university prestige. The 3 major themes were sensemaking, framing, and restorying. Further, this study revealed strategies associated within each of the major themes, as demonstrated by higher education leaders specifically in leading efforts to increase university prestige. This study adds to the literature in the disciplines of storytelling and leadership, higher education leadership, organizational change in higher education, and strategic planning in higher education. Implications for higher education leaders and the universities they serve were also discussed. Limitations of this study along with research findings guided recommendations for future research, including but not limited to, conducting a longitudinal study to study the impact of storytelling as a strategy for leading change in university prestige over a designated period of time, and expanding the study to observe



the use of storytelling in universities outside of the United States. Storytelling as a strategy for leading change within institutions of higher education to increase prestige helps constituencies make sense of change, frame the details surrounding change, and implement a new story and refocused vision for attaining increased prestige.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction of the Problem**

Higher education leaders seek to identify strategies and opportunities to improve the reputation and brand of their universities and maximize the prestige level associated with their institutions' names. Garvin (1980) suggested that many institutional leaders weigh heavily the considerations of institutional prestige when making organizational decisions. A variety of strategies has been utilized to implement changes that will positively impact the level of prestige for institutions of higher education, and thus create more value for the students, alumni, faculty, staff, and supporters of each university.

Cashman (2008) described "leadership as authentic influence that creates value" (p. 24). As leaders seek to authentically influence others in hopes of creating more value for their institutions, many have utilized the skill of storytelling. Bennis (1996) argued, "Effective leaders put words to the formless longings and deeply felt needs of others. They create communities out of words. They tell stories that capture minds and win hearts" (p. 160). This study sought to discover the role of storytelling strategies for leading change in higher education and specifically as it relates to an increase in university prestige.

### **Organization of the Chapter**

Chapter 1 opens with an introduction to the role prestige plays in higher education and the pressure felt by universities to make the changes necessary to improve their public images and reputations. This is followed by an outline of the background, problem statement, and the purpose of the study. Chapter 1 also establishes the research questions, conceptual framework, design and significance of the study, and the study's limitations.

The chapter concludes with a listing of the operational definitions used in this study and is followed by a summary.

### **Statement of Problem and Background**

Universities across the United States and the world are seeking to improve their reputations and maximize prestige in order to recruit students, hire outstanding faculty and staff members, and increase financial support. Kerr (1991) stated, “All institutions, within their categories and geographic regions, compete for students, for funds, for reputation” (p. 15). To enhance the institution’s reputation, brand, and ultimately its impact and contribution to society, higher education administrators aggressively search for strategies to lead their university to an increased level of prestige. With the hope of implementing strategic changes that will thrust the university into the next level or tier, Kezar (2009) suggested, “Trustees and presidents try to get faculty and staff to adopt new pedagogical techniques, increase prestige, improve services, assess and measure learning outcomes, use technology, and/or become more student- and learner-centered” (p. 19).

The most recognized measure of the relative prestige of higher educational institutions is the annual rankings by *U.S. News and World Report*. While most leaders in higher education, including presidents, provosts, and faculty, do not support the validity of these yearly rankings, they remain the most visible approximation to what is generally acknowledged as prestige (Melguizo & Strober, 2007). Readers across the country perceive the rankings to be valid and colleges and universities are continually compared to each other based on where they rank in the report. As institutions continue to compete for students, funding, acclaim, and private support, these rankings have become a standard for evaluating prestige in higher education. While reputational ranking is not a

science, as it relies on personal judgments and opinions, the reputations established by the ranking services can be an institution's greatest asset (Kerr, 1991).

Creating change in any organization for the purpose of increased support and enhanced reputation is a difficult process. Robbins and Judge (2008) wrote, "One of the most well-documented findings from studies of individual and organizational behavior is that organizations and their members resist change" (p. 268). Institutions of higher education are not immune to the resistance of change. Kezar (2009) suggested, "Common wisdom is that business welcomes change more than higher education does" (p. 19). This reluctance to change creates difficulties for leaders within institutions of higher learning as they seek to create change initiatives. Change creates an uncomfortable environment for most people and organizations. Duck (1993) describes change as intensely personal and believes for change to occur fully in any organization, each individual must think, feel, or do something different than they had. Leaders of change must find strategies that will move people to find a need for change.

The role of the leader in the change process is key to the organization's ability to withstand and prosper through difficult times of resistance, reluctance, and transition. Garvin and Roberto (2005) and Robbins and Judge (2008) believed that the leader has many roles during the change process. In order for the change to become the norm, the leader must run an effective persuasion campaign, develop a change strategy for change, demonstrate to employees how the change will benefit the organization, build trust that he or she is the right person to lead the change process, manage the mood of the organization, set an example for others to follow, provide coaching, and reinforce good behaviors.

Gabriel (2000) posited, “Good stories entertain, explain, inspire, educate, and convince” (p. 1). Stories have proved to be a great instigator of motivation to change a current reality. Daft (2008) proposed, “Telling stories helps people make sense of complex situations, inspires action, and brings about change in ways that other forms of communication cannot” (p. 279). Leaders have used storytelling as a tool to cast vision for their organization and provide a framework for the necessity of change. Stories assist many within organizations to understand better the need for transformation and to unite under the umbrella of change. Weick (2001) described the power of stories to solve organizational dilemmas by writing, “Stories remind people of key values on which they are centralized. When people share the same stories, those stories provide general guidelines within which they can customize diagnoses and solutions to local problems” (p. 341).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. Despite serving differing audiences and having unique amounts of resources available, institutions across types tend to come to a common aspiration to increase prestige in order to move to the next level on the hierarchical ladder. Institutions ambitious in their quest to increase prestige have demonstrated an inability to utilize anything but a rather generic set of strategies for change (Toma, 2009).

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were used to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. The questions were developed to align with the conceptual framework discovered in the literature review. The three research questions examined in

this study were:

1. How is storytelling defined by higher education leaders?
2. What are the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige?
3. How are framing, sensemaking, and restorying evidenced?

The research questions focused on identifying storytelling strategies used by university leaders to increase institutional prestige and impact change in higher education.

### **Design of the Study and Conceptual Framework**

The design of this study was qualitative and utilized semistructured questions. Patton (2002) suggested, the “purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories” (p. 21). Creswell (2009) noted that a qualitative research design involves “emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data” (p. 4). The Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA) was used to collect the data in this study, and institutional leaders with at least 1 year of experience at the executive level of university administration served as the research sample.

The conceptual framework of this study was based on three characteristics of storytelling found in the literature review to be a benefit during organizational change: framing, sensemaking, and restorying. These three characteristics are based upon Weick’s (2001) depiction that stories are important to help, “register, summarize, and allow reconstruction of scenarios that are too complex for logical linear summaries to preserve”

(p. 341). Bolman and Deal (2008) noted that framing “makes it easier to know what you are up against and, ultimately, what you can do about it” (p. 11). Weick (2001) suggested that sensemaking entails finding the coherence of a situation, how events go together, and credibility and that the goal of making sense is to determine “What’s the story here?” (p. 462) or “What’s a story here?” (p. 462). Lessem (1998) suggested, “Re-storying involves a change not merely in the individual events of your work and life themselves, but in your master story. When such change happens, it is a genuine re-formation or even transformation” (p. 396). Reissner (2008) proposed, “The interplay between change, organizational learning, sense-making, and narrative and story-telling is vital to explain how organizations learn in times of profound change” (p. 207).

### **The Study’s Significance**

Bornstein (2003) suggested, “It is through the telling and retelling of the institution’s story that constituents from all groups become excited, challenged, and engaged” (p. 129). Recognizing the skill of storytelling as a necessity in leadership is significant to university leaders seeking to increase their institution’s prestige, brand, and level of reputation. University presidents, provosts, trustees, and faculty and staff members can use the information from this study as a model for leading strategic change in their institutions. An understanding of how to use storytelling as a strategy for leading change in university prestige could be of significance to leaders in higher education seeking to help increase the reputation and brand of their institution.

Institutions of higher education are constantly seeking to identify strategies to increase their level of prestige. Higher education has become a fiercely competitive field, as colleges and universities seek to improve their reputation and level of prestige for fear

they will be passed by another institution. Kirp (2003) stated, “Prestige is the coin of the realm among the leading research universities and liberal arts colleges; and since prestige is a scarce commodity, the losers will far outnumber the winners” (p. 4). This study provided a framework for helping leaders in higher education seeking to distance themselves from the competition.

This study is significant to university presidents and administrators who are actively seeking to raise financial resources and awareness for their institutions. Storytelling as a strategy for leading change in institutional prestige helps to alleviate some of the negative feelings or apprehension felt by some presidents who do not quite grasp the intricacies of their role as a fund-raiser. Wenrich and Reid (2003) suggested presidents hesitant about fund-raising must see fund-raising, “as simply advocating for their colleges and telling their stories, the ‘ask’ become easier. The critical part is to get potential donors to match their heartfelt interests with what the college and foundations are doing for people” (p. 30). Storytelling serves as a great introduction for the president to intensify the interest of potential donors and friends.

This study is significant for academia, as its results can benefit those within the institution charged with increasing the level of prestige, brand, and reputation through planned change and communication strategies. Storytelling can be used as a strategy for leading and communicating change in all types of organizations and industries. Communication is a key component to creating change in any organization and Neuhauser (1993) suggested, “Stories are the single most powerful form of human communication. This has been true all over the world for thousands of years and is still just as true today in our organizations, communities, and families” (p. 4).



Higher education faculty members also stand to benefit from an increase in university prestige. Brewer, Gates, and Goldman (2005) noted that as institutions increase in their level of prestige, the rewards for faculty members often include reduced teaching loads, increased institutional research support, and an increase in faculty salaries. Faculty members employed by prestigious universities also stand to have their own personal levels of prestige and reputation enhanced as more respect is generated for their academic research and scholarship (Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006).

The students who enroll and ultimately graduate from higher education institutions also stand to benefit from a study on increasing university prestige. Geiger (2002) noted students who attend and graduate from institutions regarded as prestigious tend to rise in the eyes of potential employers and graduate school admissions recruiters. He stated the question associated with institutional prestige is generally, “How good are the students of college x?” (p. 86). Brewer et al. (2005) noted, “The mere fact that a student graduates from a prestigious institution sends a signal to the world about that student’s quality and motivation” (p. 60).

This study also included a discussion on change theory and provided examples of strategies used by leaders to initiate, manage, and implement change in organizations. University administrators and leaders seeking to become change agents in their institutional setting can benefit from this study as they seek to motivate others to work toward change. Change agents within their respective academic or cocurricular departments can draw upon the models discussed in this study, by seeing how strategic storytelling can assist in communicating change. In describing the leader’s role in change efforts, Daft (2008) stated, “Leaders serve as the main role models for change and

provide the motivation and communication to keep change efforts moving forward” (p. 454).

### **Limitations**

While findings in this study were found to be significant, there were also limitations. The following were limitations of this study:

1. A relatively small number of university leaders will participate in this study. A larger sample size may yield different data.
2. Participants represented a small sample of universities. A larger sampling representing a larger number of institutions may yield different findings than the ones discovered in this study.
3. This study was limited to American colleges and universities. Data collected from institutional leaders from other countries may produce different findings.
4. Only nonprofit higher education institutions were observed in this study. Leaders from for-profit institutions may have responded differently to the interview questions.
5. The sample population was limited to leaders in higher education with at least 1 year of leadership experience at the president, provost, vice president, or dean level. Interviewing university leaders of a lower rank might yield different results.
6. The use of storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige is a relatively new concept and there is limited literature available.

## **Operational Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions are offered:

*Change*: Something initiated by one or more organizational leaders, intended to achieve certain results through the modification of other people's behaviors or routines, with the success or failure to achieve these modifications having consequences for the particular organizational unit or the organization as a whole (Herold & Fedor, 2008, p. xiii).

*Frame(ing)*: Bolman and Deal (2008) defined framing as “a mental model—a series of ideas and assumptions—that you carry in your head to help you understand and negotiate a particular territory” (p. 11). Bolman and Deal (2008) also suggested “framing involves matching mental maps to circumstances” (p. 12).

*Organizational Change*: Planned alteration of organizational components to advance the efficacy of the organization. These components may include organizational purpose, vision, strategy, goals, composition, process or system, technology, and individuals within the organization (Cawsey & Dezscia, 2007).

*Planned Change*: A deliberate process designed to solve a problem or improve a condition (Winstead, 1982, p. 19)

*Prestige*: A high level of quality usually demonstrated in the accumulation of things that tend to be associated with exceptionally high-quality service. Prestige is often identified by the opinions of the customers, or by industry experts (Brewer et al., 2005).

*Restorying*: A change in the individual events of work or life that creates a new master story. When such change happens, it is a genuine reformation or even transformation that takes place (Lessem, 1998).

*Sensemaking*: Sutherland and Dawson (2002) stated sensemaking is, “a set of ideas emanating from the fields of psychology and organization studies that seeks to reveal how individuals construct meaning, interpret their world, and function within it” (p. 52).

*Story*: Simmons (2003) stated story is the, “narration of a sequence of events that simulates a visual, sensory, and emotional experience that feels significant for both the listener and the teller” (p. 41).

*Storytelling*: The telling, sharing, and relaying of stories in order to allow listeners to create images and thoughts in their own minds that stimulate the reflective process and stimulate experience (Simmons, 1999).

*Storytelling Organization*: Rosile and Boje (2002) state that this is, “a dynamic action of sequences and characters (real or imaginary) that comprise a collective memory network in performed stories, the meaning of which is revised as part of the story work of any organization” (p. 273).

*Strategy*: Patton (1990) states strategy is, “a framework for action. A strategy provides basic direction. It permits seemingly isolated tasks and activities to fit together; it moves separate efforts toward a common, integral purpose” (p. 36).

*University*: A 4-year accredited institution of higher education. In this study, the terms university and college are used interchangeably.

*Unplanned Change*: Saiyadain (2003) states, “Situations or conditions that are imposed on the organizations are often unforeseen. Responsiveness to unplanned change usually requires tremendous flexibility and adaptability on the part of organizations” (p. 175).

## Summary

Universities are in constant competition with each other for the top students, faculty, and resources. Bok (2003) explained, “Competition occurs when a number of actors vie with one another to reach a goal they cannot all achieve in equal measure” (p. 159). This chapter introduced the concept of utilizing storytelling as a strategy for leading change in institutions of higher education and, in particular, as it pertains to increasing prestige. The purpose of this study focused on ascertaining the role that storytelling strategies have played in change efforts within the higher education setting. The three research questions were highlighted in this chapter and their intent to discover storytelling strategies used by leaders to create change in higher education was identified. The chapter also briefly discussed the impact of storytelling in higher education and introduced the relationship between storytelling and leading change in higher education.

In Chapter 1, the design of this qualitative study was summarized. The study will utilize the DNA for qualitative investigations and the research sample of university leaders with at least 1 year of experience at the executive level is introduced. This chapter sought to describe the significance that storytelling within the organization could have on the strategic changes colleges and universities seek to initiate in order to enhance their level of prestige. The significance of this study was depicted for leaders within higher education seeking to enhance their efforts to initiate change in university prestige within their institutions. The chapter concluded with a brief explanation of the limitations associated with this study and a listing of the operating definitions and key terms used throughout this study. The following four chapters include a thorough review of the literature, a detailed description of the methods utilized to conduct this study, a

presentation of the research findings, and a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This study investigated the use of storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. A review of the literature was performed in order to establish how this topic fits into the fields of organizational change and higher education. The literature review observed three main topics of interest: higher education prestige, organizational change, and storytelling. The academic literature in these areas is extensive and provides a solid foundation for discovery and exploration within this issue.

### **Organization of the Chapter**

The literature review consists of four clear and diverse sections and is concluded with a summary of the findings. The first section deals with the scholarly literature on higher education and, more specifically, a historical overview of the American higher education system. The second section explores the literature found on the elements of university prestige and the background of the search for prestige in higher education. The third section addresses the known literature in the field of organizational change, the leading change theorists, reasons organizations change, the difficulties of change, and change strategies. The fourth section discusses the role of storytelling in leading change and as a strategy for leading change in universities seeking to increase prestige. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and an explanation for their relevance to this study.

### **An Overview of the American University System**

A study focused on change in university prestige must begin with a look at an overview of the American higher education system. Ruscio (1987) posited that education, as a process does not easily fit into the typical framework of an organization. He

suggested, “Organizations continually impose routines, eliminate personal vagaries, and have a predisposition toward an efficiency not always hospitable to the creativity and individualism required in the pursuit of knowledge” (p. 348). The institutions within the American higher education system, despite a plethora of diversity, share a common background in the colleges founded during colonial times. Thelin (2004) stated, “The historic colleges founded in the colonial era enjoy a special place in our national memory...not only are these colleges old, they also are influential and vivid in the American imagination” (p. 1). These colonial colleges created a lasting legacy that impacts today’s colleges and universities in the way they are governed, structured, and financed; the role of religion in the academy; the curriculum; and in philanthropy.

**Governance and structure.** Thelin (2004), in his historical account of higher education, depicts the impact of the colonial colleges within these areas. He suggested the founders of the colonial colleges were in favor of the mixed living and learning style of education, which had been a staple of the English collegiate system. However, Thelin also suggested the founders of colonial colleges did not support the faculty of the colleges having complete control, and this prompted the colleges to look at the Scottish example of a governing board designed to guide the institution and hold it accountable for its teaching. Thelin later noted the colonial colleges also established the position of the college president and gave this individual the administrative authority necessary to lead the institution.

Kaufman (1993) proposed that one of the most distinguishable aspects of the American university is its structure of governance. These governing boards may be called trustees in independent colleges and universities while they may be referred to as regents



in public institutions. These groups of people represent a variety of professional and educational backgrounds and are considered to be “a major feature of American higher education decision making” (Kaufman, 1993, p. 222).. The literature pertaining to the roles played by governing bodies of American colleges and universities suggested a variety of responsibilities. The 1973 Carnegie Commission on Higher Education’s report concerning college and university governance identified six main functions performed by boards of trustees: (a) to oversee the long-run wellbeing of the total institution; (b) to act as a buffer between society and the campus, maintaining an understanding of the relation between the realities of society and its impact on the campus; (c) to serve as the final arbiter of disputes between campus constituencies; (d) to serve as an agent of change and should be able to decide what changes are necessary and the proper time to initiate change; (e) to oversee the financial welfare of the campus; and (f) most of all to provide governance for the entire institution.

Fisher (1991) offered 13 primary responsibilities of college and university governing boards. Fisher’s suggested responsibilities can be summarized as follows: (a) to appoint the president, (b) to evaluate the institution, (c) to review periodically and assess the board policies, (d) to provide the president with psychological and substantive support, (e) to review the performance of the president, (f) to ensure a consistent review of the institutional mission, (g) to approve the long-range plans, (h) to oversee the all important educational components of the institution, (i) to ensure financial solvency and to raise financial support, (j) to preserve institutional independence, (k) to represent well the campus to the external community, (l) to serve as a court of appeal in cases of institutional dispute, and (m) to objectively evaluate the board’s performance.

The role of the academic president has changed tremendously throughout the years. At one time, the president was considered to be the top academic person on a campus, whose main responsibilities included curriculum development, faculty hiring, and the promotion of academic rigor on the campus. Bornstein (1996) suggested the key functions of the higher education president “has evolved from that of the colonial religious leader and moral arbiter to the entrepreneur of the post-Civil War research university and then to the institution builder of the post-World War II era” (p. 46). As the competition for educational funds and resources has become stronger, the college and university president has been required to add the role of fund-raiser to his or her list of responsibilities. Bornstein later noted, “In an era of fiscal constraints, changing demographics, public disaffection, and heated competition for resources and students, presidents are focused on maintaining the viability and quality of their institutions, which limits time for civic leadership” (p. 47). The impact a president has on the institution is often judged by the amount of money raised during his or her time in office. Wiseman (1991) stated, “A president in whose tenure the university does not raise more money than it did before is a president looking for a new line of work” (p. 6). Kerr (1984) suggested, “The president has the primary responsibility for assessing the likely future and for preparing the campus to meet it” (p. 93). This change in presidential expectation has greatly impacted the job description of the college or university president.

**University finance.** Thelin (2004) described the colonial colleges financial situation as being erratically and marginally supported by the taxes collected by the British crown. He suggested that the system was set up to help the colonial colleges with a percentage of the tax dollars derived from the tolls, license surcharges, tobacco

poundage, lottery proceeds, and gifts of land. The inconsistency of this financial support created an environment in which the colonial colleges relied primarily on student tuition and private contributions as well as the government subsidies in order to function. The funding predicaments experienced by the colonial college are consistent with the modern college and university. Trow (1993) describes the diversity of funding “at the heart of the diversity of character and function of American higher education” (p. 41). He later proposed that the typical college and university receive its funding from a variety of sources, including but not limited to, national, state, and local governments, churches, business firms, philanthropic foundations, alumni, donors, from tuition and fees, room and board, and auxiliary enterprises.

While all colleges and universities rely on each different funding source to help meet their financial obligations, most have become extremely proactive in their quest to secure funds through the art of private fund-raising. Soliciting the financial support of those in the private sector has become a major undertaking for most colleges and universities. Kerr (1991) noted, “Private fund-raising by both the public and private institutions has, in recent times, increasingly become a mechanism for competitive advantage” (p. 15). Institutional constituents most often approached for support are interested community members, college or university alumni, parents of former students, local organizations, business leaders, and known philanthropists. It is the desire of the higher education institution that these individuals and groups will be willing and eager to play a key role in the continued improvement of the institution’s mission and future.

**Academic curriculum and instruction.** At the heart of the American higher education system is the academic curriculum and the faculty. Thelin (2004) proposed that

the colonial colleges established expectations regarding a student's course work. This usually consisted of classical languages, ancient authors and writings, and an increasing level of mastery in mathematics. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005), pedagogy, "literally means the art and science of teaching children" (p. 61), and is the term used to define the traditional model of teaching that has served as the primary source of instruction in American higher education. The pedagogy of the early American college involved primarily a mix of classroom recitations and oral disputes and often the motivation for a young man to study "biblical texts, solve mathematical problems, or conjugate Latin verbs was to avoid the jeers that greeted poor public speaking, flawed logic, or faulty translations" (p. 19). Clark (1993) described the continually evolving university curriculum by suggesting that it not only consists of law, medicine, and theology, but also a widening variety of disciplines and an increased research imperative. The limits to which universities would like to expand their outreach and influence is only restricted by the limited resources available.

While still highly visible components of the academic experience in most colleges and universities, the lecture and seminar formats are being challenged by the availability of online education, technology advancements, and the rise in the number of adult learners who have access to higher education. Knowles et al. (2005) discussed the transition that is taking place in higher education between the pedagogical model of instruction and the andragogical model. Knowles et al. suggested that adults learn differently than children and should be in control of their learning. Thelin (2004) outlined a shift in the mode of teaching and curriculum beginning in the 1880s, as the daily rituals of recitation and disputation were replaced by the lecture and seminar formats. The

lecture format consisted of a large audience, little discussion, and provided a stage for the professor to serve as an expert, while the seminar format provided an opportunity for a small group of advanced students to meet with a professor to discuss and share research and ideas on a specific theme or topic. Thelin (2004) also noted it was during this time that a great deal of teaching and learning began to take place outside of the classroom, as students began to utilize libraries, museums, fieldwork, and perform their own research expeditions.

The role of the faculty member has varied throughout the history of American higher education, but from the founding of the first colleges, the overriding role of the American professor has been to teach (Metzger, 1987). Ruscio (1987) suggested that the spread of and formation of knowledge call for a mixture of responsibilities that when brought together mirror the variety of personal preferences, disciplinary training, and institutional imperatives found within the American university. Ruscio posited that there are three main propositions about the sectorial activities of university faculty members: research for publication, teaching, and significant research. The profession of the academic faculty member has been described as being unique in that those within its ranks typically demonstrate a double allegiance, first to the discipline in which they were trained and second to the institution that employs them (Perkin, 1987).

Bowen and Schuster (1986) examined four tasks of the American higher education professor: instruction, research, public service, and institutional governance and operation. They referred to instruction as the direct teaching of students in classrooms and laboratories, academic conferences, tutorials, and advising students. In terms of research, they allude to the activities of faculty members who advance

knowledge and the arts, including but not limited to, humanistic scholarship, scientific research in the natural and social sciences, philosophical and religious inquiry, social criticism, public-policy investigation, and promotion of literature and the fine arts. In regard to the faculty members' role in public service, Bowen and Schuster suggested that faculty members might be broadly associated with public service through impacts of their teaching and research on the community, consulting, and technical services. Finally, they noted that faculty members, individually and collectively, usually occupy a prominent role in the policy and decision-making activities associated with the academic campus.

**University students.** Thelin (2004) suggested the earliest students in American colleges were privileged white males who were expected to inherit leadership roles in their family businesses and communities. Learning was serious for these early students, as they were expected to foster the skills necessary to be analytical and articulate, all the while being focused on becoming Christian gentlemen. According to Altbach (1993) there were opportunities for students from immigrant and blue-collar families to attend college prior to World War II, but most of the American college students were from middle class families. However, he suggested that since World War II, American colleges and universities have experienced a tremendous shift in student demographics, with more women, minorities, and nontraditional students entering higher education classrooms.

To demonstrate further the growing level of accessibility to higher education, the U.S. Department of Education's (2010) report titled "The Condition of Education" stated that total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased from 7.4 million students in 1970 to 13.2 million in 2000 and to 16.4 million in 2008. The U. S. Department of Education (2009) reported that in 2007, minorities made

up 32.2% of the total enrollment in American colleges and universities, while women received more than 57% of the bachelor's degree awarded in this country.

The rise in the number of adult learners has had a great impact on the campuses of American colleges and universities. Keller (1983) stated, "Universities are being pushed and pulled out of their traditional role as teachers of post adolescent youth into a quite different role as educators of people of all ages after puberty" (p. 14). Altbach (1993) noted that adult learners have different needs compared to traditional students, as they are "often full-time students, do not participate as actively in campus activities, and tend to be more career-oriented than their younger compeers" (p. 205). Christenson (1982) explained that the change in student demographics and a decline in enrollments will have significant repercussions on the kinds of student programs, housing, recruitment, and activities than the traditional model.

### **University Prestige**

**The search for prestige.** Universities exist in a highly competitive market for students, faculty, research support, and gifts. Geiger (2002) suggested the behavior of universities can be described as a competition for prestige to achieve or maintain status. Melguizo and Strober (2007) compared higher education institutions to for-profit firms by stating, "While economic theory analyzes for-profit firms as profit maximizers, the developing economic theory of higher education sees non-profit higher education institutions as prestige maximizers" (p. 633). Bok (2003) depicted the competitive nature of the modern university as being vigorous with academic distinction, or prestige, as the primary objective. The competition for prestige in higher education is fierce and creates a variety of challenges and difficult decisions for leaders within each college and

university. Brewer et al. (2005) proposed that these challenges come from not only the cultural environment, but also from, “other institutions that would like to improve their own position in the higher education pecking order” (p. 41).

**Prestige and reputation.** Higher education institutions may choose to invest in both building their reputations and pursuing an increased level of prestige, although many act strategically to pursue one more passionately and purposefully over the other. A review of the literature on higher education prestige produced an astounding amount of scholarly thoughts concerning the difference between institutional prestige and institutional reputation. For the purpose of this study, the differences between the two very similar yet distinctive attributes will be identified.

Goldman, Gates, and Brewer (2001) offered that institutional reputation is based on recent performance, may be for low quality as well as high quality, and can be measured on absolute scales. Brewer et al. (2005) stated that reputation can be good or bad and is directly related to an institution’s ability to respond to the demands of its customers and the level to which it demonstrates an ability to meet those demands. Reputation is built on the basis of obtaining information, thus it can be built less expensively and in shorter amounts of time. Sung and Yang (2008) proposed, “The reputation of an organization refers to the public perceptions of the organization shared by its multiple constituents over time” (p. 363). Brewer et al. (2005) suggested reputation depreciates rapidly when compared to prestige and exists as a nonrival good that results in a positive-sum game. This means that when one institution elevates its reputation, it is not necessarily at the expense of another university, and that there is an infinite number of institutions that can have an enhanced reputation.



Goldman et al. (2001) contrasted prestige with reputation by suggesting that it is a characteristic of the institution as a whole and is judged by comparing the university to its peers. Brewer et al. (2005) described prestige as being always positive and while institutions possessing a high-level of prestige often cannot demonstrate an ability to meet identifiable customer needs, they can demonstrate the acquisition of things associated with exceptionally high-quality service and “looking right” (p. 28). They also proposed that the institutions seeking prestige are constantly looking inward for direction, that prestige depreciates slowly, is actually a rival good, and results in a zero-sum game. This means university prestige once attained is difficult to lose and that as one institution increases its level of prestige, it is typically at the expense of others, limiting the number of institutions that can claim prestige. Table 1 helps to clarify the characteristics of both prestige and reputation.

Table 1

*Characteristics of Prestige and Reputation*

Prestige	Reputation
Measured in relation to peers (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001; Sung & Yang, 2008)	Measured in absolute standards (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001)
Defined by internal desires and expressions of attainment (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001)	Defined by constituent wishes (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001)

*(continued)*

Prestige	Reputation
Declines gradually (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001)	Declines quickly (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001)
A rival good (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001)	A nonrival good (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001)
A game where when one organization win's, another must lose (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001; Melguizo & Strober, 2007)	A game where multiple organizations may win (Brewer et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2001; Toma, 2009)

**Value and cost of seeking prestige.** According to Brewer et al. (2005), there are many benefits for an institution seeking prestige, including an improved revenue generating ability in the markets for public fiscal support and private giving, may boost efforts in recruiting top students and increasing research funding, and tends to promote excellence, as schools are continuously being forced to improve specific aspects of quality in order to raise their standing in the education hierarchy. Ehrenberg (2000) suggested that many institutions are engaged in, “the equivalent of an arms race of spending to improve its absolute quality and to try to improve its relative stature in the prestige pecking order” (p. 277).

Goldman et al. (2001) explained that seeking prestige generates both value and costs for institutions of higher education. They suggested there is great benefit for the university if seeking prestige creates an atmosphere to push the institution to perform better than its peers, pursue excellence, and raise standards for admissions, research, and athletic competition. Abbott (1974) suggested that the greater the pursuit of prestige for a

university the less focused it was on its adaptive goals, which “include any policies and acts that are instrumental in dealing with an organizational environment” (p. 406). Lovett (2005) noted that universities that choose to pursue prestige often have no interest in admitting a larger number of applicants, even though there are increasing numbers of students from diverse backgrounds who are interested in having access to higher education.

Richman and Farmer (1974) noted, “The more prestigious the school, the less regard often given to students, because most activities and power centers in such a school often have nothing to do with students” (p. 275). They also noted that the, “prestigious schools get more than their share of first-rate young minds, although these are the schools where fine minds are frequently most neglected” (p. 277). Goldman et al. (2001) posited that the pursuit of prestige can be expensive and risky, as the costs associated with pursuing prestige may neglect the needs of undergraduate students, alumni, and government officials. Goldman et al. reported that the stock of prestige is stable or declining as a result of factors outside of institutional control, and while universities may continue to seek prestige, many of their strategies may prove to be out of line with their long-run financial well being. Brewer et al. (2005) proposed, “When an institution possesses prestige but is striving to expand into more costly degree offerings, it risks current prestige against a mere chance that it will achieve prestige in a broader strategy” (p. 118).

Lovett (2005) suggested that another consequence of higher education’s pursuit of prestige is the devaluing of the hundreds of American institution’s that do not appear in the rankings of the prestigious. Lovett noted that the devaluing of these less prestigious

institutions may come from their more selective peer institutions, the news media, students, and parents who tend to care more about name recognition than about the true education offered by these less prestigious universities.

### **Elements of University Prestige**

In seeking to determine what dictates university prestige, the literature suggested several common elements of prestige: students, faculty, rankings, financial support, and resource distribution (Bok, 2003; Brewer et al., 2005; Geiger, 2002; Sweitzer & Volkwein, 2009; Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006). Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) expanded the list of components that make up institutional prestige and reputation to include, “average high school class standing of entering freshmen, admissions, acceptance rates, instructional budget per student, percentage of faculty possessing Ph.D.s, faculty publication rates, average cost of tuition, room and board, and retention-graduation rates” (p. 130). Brewer et al. (2005) put forward student quality, research, and sports as the major prestige generators for higher education. This study focuses on the components involving students, faculty, rankings, financial stability, and resource distribution.

**Students.** A study of the literature focusing on the student component of university prestige provides a glimpse of a common element of prestigious colleges and universities. Brewer et al. (2005) noted, “Institutions build prestige in the market for students by bringing in students with high test scores and grades, by lowering acceptance rates, and by improving admissions yield rates” (p. 61). Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) recommended that an institution enhance its prestige by, “investing its resources in student recruitment, marketing, and financial aid in order to attract a competitive admissions pool and selective student body” (p. 133). They offered that admissions

selectivity is indicated by measures such as median standardized test scores, freshmen who graduated in the top 10% of their high school class, and admissions acceptance rates. Brewer et al. (2005) noted, “For institutions that focus on undergraduate education, the primary opportunity to build and maintain prestige is through selectivity in admissions” (p. 32).

Szelest (2003) surmised that spending money on student recruitment activities and support services positively impacts the relative attractiveness of the institution to potential students. Geiger (2002) posited that admission selectivity is important, but in terms of institutional prestige, the more critical question to ask is: “How good are the students of college x?” (p. 86). Geiger noted that admission’s selectivity varies depending on the type of institution and that, “the most selective institutions in the country are found to be among the private liberal arts colleges and private research universities” (p. 86). Geiger suggested that for the wealthy private liberal arts colleges, the quality of their student body is a major source of status while the private research universities rely on admissions selectivity along with the scholarly reputation of its faculty to help establish their status. Sung and Yang (2008) suggested, “As a result of increased competition, universities have been pushed to brand themselves as having a set of unique and desirable attributes that appeal to potential students” (p. 358).

According to Melguizo and Strober (2007), “The greater an institution’s ability to attract students with high grade point averages and high test scores, the more likely it will be to attract future applicants with similar characteristics” (p. 637). Goldman et al. (2001) noted that many prestige-seeking institutions have adopted a philosophy that allows them to lower admissions standards for students who can pay the full tuition, while offering

generous financial aid packages to top students no matter their level of financial need.

Goldman et al. also suggested that this tactic in the pursuit of prestige negatively impacts the students who seek degrees from prestigious universities yet do not come from wealthy backgrounds and those who do not meet the traditional profile who would ordinarily aid in prestige building.

**Faculty.** Within higher education institutions, a major factor in determining prestige for a university is the quality and reputation of the faculty. Cole (2009) noted, “Great universities, almost by definition, require highly productive faculty members” (p. 110). Melguizo and Strober (2007) suggested that each time a faculty member publishes an article or book, becomes involved in a research program, or receives a research grant, the institution benefits through an increase in prestige. Geiger (2002) explained, “Scholarly reputation is a vitally important institutional characteristic regardless of the imprecision of the pecking order” (p. 86). Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) concluded that the quality of the faculty and the classroom learning experience provide a great amount of influence on current and prospective students, while faculty research and scholarship greatly influences a perception of academic quality and academic prestige. They argued that the faculty members’ teaching, scholarship, and research increases the attractiveness of the institution to prospective students, which can lead to strengthened enrollments and financial gains.

According to Richman and Farmer (1974), the “quality and reputation of any university or college depend primarily on the faculty. All the other inputs and outputs are secondary to how well the faculty does its job” (p. 258). They later posited that the reputation of university administrators “will in large part depend on how well they

manage to keep their diverse professors productive” (p. 258). Blau (1994) produced evidence that suggested that talented faculty attract talented students and provide significant proof that the recruitment of quality faculty and students are related. According to Ehrenberg (2000), institutional rankings and prestige, “also influence the willingness of research-oriented faculty to accept positions at a university, because high quality graduate students enhance the teaching and research of faculty involved in graduate education” (p. 50).

Melguizo and Strober (2007) noted three faculty inputs that can impact an institution’s pursuit of university prestige: (a) when a faculty member receives a research grant or is named a principal investigator for a research project; (b) the prestige of the institution at which the faculty member received his or her highest degree; and (c) the amount of time a faculty member spends on teaching versus the amount of time devoted to research. Melguizo and Strober also suggested that some faculty members have concentrated their efforts on maximizing their own and their institution’s prestige, and in doing so have neglected or put aside such important components of their position as teaching, preparing to teach, meeting with students, and advising.

**Rankings.** One of the most controversial components of university prestige involves the large number of rating and ranking systems that have been developed to compare universities. Bowen, Kurzwell, and Tobin (2005) explained that the difficulty in defining and measuring “quality” (p. 63) in higher education is compounded because of the concept’s subjective nature, the different purposes served by a variety of higher education institutions, and the lack of readily comparable data. A leading organization in the production of an annual rating and ranking system is U.S. News and World Report.

Weiner (2009) summarizes the U.S. News and World Report reputation score as a derivative of responses submitted by university administrators who have been asked to rank their peers in a number of areas. Although the academic community does not view the U.S. News and World Report rankings as reliable, they have played a key role in the decision process of students seeking higher education as well as in faculty making decisions regarding their personal career choices. Bok (2003) offered that the U.S. News and World Report rankings while notoriously unreliable are the most “concrete expression” (p. 159) of academic prestige currently available.

While there are numerous groups producing ranking guides, four organizations, *Barron's*, Peterson's, Fiske, and the Princeton Review, have distinguished themselves, as they produce guidebooks designed to compare, rate, and rank higher education institutions. *Barron's* and Peterson's share similar institutional coverage and classify colleges by admissions selectivity. *Barron's* uses information gathered on most accredited 4-year institutions and utilizes a nine-category grouping to measure the competition for admissions. Peterson's also looks at 4-year colleges and universities and asks each institution to place itself into one of five categories related to difficulty in admission. Fiske uses a five-star rating system for rating the academic, social, and student life at each college campus. The Princeton Review looks to compare institutions in four categories—admissions, academics, quality of life on campus, and financial aid programs (Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006).

Skepticism surrounds the accuracy of these rating and ranking systems; Sweitzer and Volkwein (2009) describe that these ratings are in fact important to universities as they seek to position themselves in the highly competitive higher education marketplace.



In light of the differing opinions constructed around the validity of the rating and ranking systems currently in place, Sweitzer and Volkwein have developed a framework for defining excellence in higher education based on the work of J. C. Burke (2005), J. C. Burke and Minassians (2003), J. C. Burke and Serban (1998), and Seymour (1992). The four competing models or philosophies are summarized as follows:

- **Resource-Reputation Model**—This model emphasizes the importance of financial resources, faculty qualifications, student exam scores, external financial support, and peer ratings. This model is conventionally accepted by the academic community as reputation ratings by experts are normally seen as valid.
- **Client-Centered Model**—This service-oriented model connects quality and institutional excellence to student and alumni approval, faculty accessibility and attention, and the amount of services provided to students.
- **Strategic Investment Model**—This model emphasizes return on investment, cost-benefit analysis, and is highly results centered. Areas of interest within this model are admissions yield rates, graduation rates, retention rates, and costs per student.
- **Talent Development Model**—This model is the most oriented toward academic outcomes and places the growth of the student and the faculty as key. An institution is deemed successful in this model if it works to ensure student and faculty development in knowledge, ability, thinking, and curiosity.

**Financial stability.** Geiger (2002) described prestige as both the cause and the result of getting or having good students, good faculty, and ample financial support. Brewer et al. (2005) noted that higher education institutions receive financial revenue from four distinct markets: student enrollments, research funding, public fiscal support, and private giving. According to Cole (2009), the total amount of financial support, “including dollars from key federal and state agencies, private foundations, and private giving, is a good indicator of the intensity and level of research at a university” (p. 111). Brewer et al. (2005) suggested that universities compete for the revenue provided by institutional customers or the “students, alumni, employers, corporations, governments, and private individuals” (p. 3).

A positive correlation has been found between a university’s level of ranking and the size of an institution’s endowment, which indicates that as prestige increases, so does an institution’s ability to attract financial donations (Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999; Salmi, 2009). Melguizo and Strober (2007) suggested that although faculty reputation and scholarly activity is the primary source of prestige for a university, many institutions have maximized prestige by achieving an increased size in their endowment and setting and achieving large goals in fund-raising campaigns, which allow the institution to compete for and retain a high quality faculty. Cole (2009) proposed, “Universities with large endowments and access to other financial resources have huge advantages that are reflected in the quality of every aspect of the institution. The size of a university’s endowment is strongly associated with its perceived quality” (p. 113). Melguizo and Strober (2007) later added that well-regarded institutions with a quality student body attract well-known and talented faculty members who want to teach bright students. The

combination of bright students and well-known faculty attract new donors who want to be associated with universities that are thought to be prestigious.

Bok (2003) suggested the need for money in American higher education “is a chronic condition inherent in the very nature of an institution forever competing for the best students and faculty” (p. 9). Melguizo and Strober (2007) also noted that donors provide additional resources to the university to build and support enhanced student, faculty, and research amenities while other dollars are assigned to endowments, which help to propel the university further with a financial cushion during difficult economic times. These endowments allow universities to plan strategically for the long-term, which in turn enhances their ability to pursue prestige.

**Resource distribution.** Another element of university prestige involves how universities spend their resources in the pursuit of prestige. Brewer et al. (2001) noted the following concerning the manner in which a university allocates its resources:

An institution’s strategy influences its stock of reputation and prestige, which in turn affects the revenues that the institution can generate and hence the discretionary resources the institution can allocate toward investment in future stocks of reputation, prestige and endowment. (p. 95)

Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) proposed universities that direct funding to faculty and student resources see an increase in the prestige generators of “research, scholarly productivity academic success, student growth, graduation rates, and alumni attainment” (p. 133). Brewer et al. (2005) suggested institutions that are seeking to increase their levels of prestige will often work to enhance the aesthetic features of their campus, provide smaller classes, improved campus technology, updated fine arts or athletic

venues, add new living spaces, and develop a vibrant campus social life. Toma (2009) offered a list of the generic strategies used by colleges and universities to increase prestige, which included building new or renovating old residence halls, enhanced dining facilities, new fitness centers, developing commercial properties on or near the campus, and focusing on improved aesthetics.

Brewer et al. (2005) suggested, “Investments in prestige are targeted to three major areas, the prestige generators: student quality, research, and sports” (p. 31). Melguizo and Strober (2007) proposed that some institution’s prestige “may be enhanced through stunning successes by athletic teams in prominent sports, particularly football and basketball” (p. 636). Brewer et al. (2005) noted that competitive sports teams could bring prestige to a university through revenue and recognition generation. Fazel and Fort (2004) posited, “Athletic departments help universities maximize the esteem with which the public at large views them” (p. 141). According to Brewer et al. (2005) the recognition that comes from success in competitive sports “may spill over into other areas, such as the market for student enrollment, public fiscal support, or private giving” (p. 32).

### **Organizational Change**

Herold and Fedor (2008) referred to organizational change as the, “demands placed on organizational subunits that require significant departures from people’s current routines and behaviors, and the success of which depends upon the support of those affected” (p. xiii). Burnes (2004) stated, “Change is a constant feature of organizational life and the ability to manage it is seen as a core competence of successful organizations” (p. 309). Weick and Quinn (1999) suggested, “organizational change

routinely occurs in the context of failure of some sort” (p. 362). Organizations are continually faced with the issue of change, and leading change has become a highly explored topic within the academic community. Global competition, cost pressures, innovation in information technology, and rising customer expectations are seen to necessitate organizational changes and put pressure on employers to manage effectively these changes (C. Handy, 1989; Kanter, 1989; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999).

**The challenges of change.** Abrahamson (2006) wrote, “Change as it is usually orchestrated, creates initiative overload and organizational chaos, both of which provoke strong resistance from the people most affected” (p. 76). Change in any organization, although extremely common, can be described as difficult and challenging. Many people are naturally resistant to change, especially as it affects something with which they are closely associated. Senge (2006) suggested, “Resistance to change is neither capricious nor mysterious. It almost always arises from threats to traditional norms and ways of doing things” (p. 88). An organization and its people’s resistance to change may stem from the organizational culture and the individuals’ own personal uncertainty about being able to adapt to a new situation. Robbins and Judge (2008) suggested that resistance to change comes from people’s reliance on set habits of doing a job or performing a task, one’s own feelings of security, and the organization’s internal built-in mechanisms to maintain structural inertia, and the all-too-often narrow focus of change.

Organizational change is often faced with not only a great deal of resistance but also many people who are skeptical to its need, impact, and importance to the overall organizational mission. W. W. Burke (2002) in reference to the challenges involved with organizational change stated, “Deep organization change, especially attempting to change

the culture of an organization is very difficult...it is often hard to make a case for change particularly when the organization appears to be doing well” (p. 1). As changes are announced and implemented, sides are immediately drawn between those who believe the change is good and support it, those who are adamantly against it, and those who lay low and take the middle ground. The conflicts that arise among these groups are a defining challenge to organizational change.

Bolman and Deal (2008) suggested organizational change is “a complex systemic undertaking... alters power relationships and undermines existing agreements and pacts, and intrudes on deeply rooted symbolic forms, traditional ways, and customary behaviors” (p. 378). They proposed that change undermines existing organizational structure, which creates, “ambiguity, confusion, and distrust” (p. 383). Bolman and Deal also proposed, as conflicts develop between those who initiated the change and those who feel strongly opposed to the change, that, “often, clashes go underground and smolder beneath the surface. Occasionally, they burst open as eruptions of unregulated warfare” (p. 385).

Herold and Fedor (2008) noted that the negative costs of undertaking change within an organization can be broken down into three categories of consequences: (a) personal costs—which signify the levy changes take on the lives of those experiencing the change, and those instigating it; (b) changes in organizational costs—the resources that compose the insubstantial qualities of the organization, which consist of a company’s status, its human capital, its brands, its background, its infrastructure, and its resourcefulness; and (c) economic impact—changes made will directly impact the economic position of the organization in the short- and long-term future(. These

underlying issues create deep and emotionally charged challenges to organizational change.

**Organizational culture.** Senge (2006) believed that organizations must be thought of as living organisms that should be viewed as entire systems as opposed to fragmented sections. Senge wrote that organizations are, “bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other” (p. 7). Systems thinking plays an important role in understanding an organization’s culture, shared assumptions, goals, and ability to survive and flourish through change. According to Schein (2004), the culture of a group can be defined as follows:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 17)

Schein (2004) discussed three levels of culture found with any organization: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions. He posited that cultural artifacts were the observable organizational arrangements and practices within an organization. Espoused beliefs and values within an organizational culture are demonstrated by the organization’s strategies, objectives, and philosophical attitudes. The underlying assumptions that make up the third level of culture include the unconscious, taken for granted values, viewpoints, opinions, and mind-sets that serve as the ultimate source of values and action in an organization.

Ott (1989) proposed, “Organizational culture is a way of looking at and thinking about behavior of and in organizations, a perspective for understanding what is

occurring” (p. 1). When assessing an organization’s culture Cameron and Quinn (2006) noted, “One can focus on the entire organization as the unit of analysis, or one can assess different subunit cultures, identify the common dominant attributes of the subunit cultures, and aggregate them” (p. 18). O’Toole (1995) summarizes the importance of the role organizational culture plays in change initiatives by stating:

Shared assumptions—common values—are thus the powerful force that, like subatomic gluons, bind together the many facets of a culture. Without this gravitational force, tribes, societies, and organizations would disintegrate at the slightest challenge. Though such forces are necessary for efficient and effective cooperation, paradoxically, they are also a prime source of resistance to change.  
(p. 182)

### **Planned Change**

Planned or episodic change groups together organizational changes that tend to be infrequent, discontinuous, and intentional and assumes that changes occur as organizations move away from equilibrium or are a result of misalignment or environmental infringement (Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001). Weick and Quinn (1999) stated, “An important emerging contrast in change research is the distinction between change that is episodic, discontinuous, and intermittent and change that is continuous, evolving, and incremental” (p. 362). Weick and Quinn proposed that planned change is often referred to as episodic because it tends to happen in distinctive periods of time when change is triggered by the contributions of significant internal and external factors. Ford and Ford (1995) suggested intentional change comes about when a leader of change “deliberately and consciously sets out to establish conditions and circumstances



that are different from what they are now and then accomplishes that through some set or series of actions and interventions either singularly or in collaboration with other people” (p. 543).

**Three-step models of planned change.** Schein (2004) posited, “The fundamental assumptions underlying any change in a human system are derived originally from Kurt Lewin” (p. 319). Lewin’s Theory of Planned Change is one of the more respected and well-known theories of change. Lewin (1951) suggested that leaders must have a solid understanding of what it takes to motivate and persuade employees before deciding to implement change. Lewin’s background in psychology and keen insights into human behavior allowed him to develop his three-step model of change involving the concepts of unfreezing, implementation or movement of change, and refreezing.

The step that Lewin (1951) labeled Unfreezing involves the leader’s intentional efforts to break down resistance to change within the organization. The leader attempts to do this by motivating the followers to come to the realization that change must occur. Often the leader in this step of the change model will try and illustrate an urgent need to do things differently in order for the organization to go forward.

The second step in Lewin’s (1951) model for change revolves around the leader’s ability to persuade the followers to accept change and to empower followers to think about doing things differently than they have always been done. This Movement step is crucial for getting buy in from constituencies affected by the change process. By including followers in the implementation process, Lewin suggested that resistance would be minimized. A new level of trust is also sought during this step of the process.

The third step of Lewin's (1951) model for change entails what he calls Refreezing. This is the point in the process at which the new policies, procedures, and processes decided upon in the previous steps become the organizational norm. These new expectations and behaviors after time, accountability, and commitment become part of the new culture. After this step, Lewin believed the change process would eventually need to be looked at again and these steps possibly repeated.

Schein (2004) expanded on Lewin's three-step model and developed his own model for cultural change in an organization. Schein's model for cultural change can be described as follows:

- Unfreezing—Schein developed the unfreezing stage into three necessary but separate processes in order for the system to develop any motivation for change.
  - There must be enough disconfirming data to provoke severe uneasiness and imbalance.
  - There must be a link between the disconfirming data and important goals and ideals, causing anxiety and/or guilt.
  - There must also be enough psychological safety, in the sense of being able to see the likelihood of solving a dilemma and learning a new way of doing things without failure or honesty.
- Movement—Schein expands Lewin's movement stage and suggested that change will not last unless cognitive redefinition and restructuring has taken place. Schein believes this also allows new assumptions within the organizational culture to develop fully.

- Refreezing—Schein expands the refreezing component in Lewin’s model to include both individual and interpersonal levels of commitment to change. Schein encourages scanning and trial-and-error learning during the learner’s involvement in the change as vital to the learning process.

**Action learning model.** Hyatt, Belden-Charles, and Stacey (2007) describe the Action Learning change method as a structured format to engage leaders and teams in a repetitive cycle of reflection and action. They suggested that action learning helps to navigate change in organizations through,

...a focus on complex challenges for which participants have accountability for action, groups that meet over a period of time to learn and apply actions, and a questioning process that uncovers assumptions which are guiding current actions within the organization. (p. 480)

McGill and Beaty (2001) noted that Action Learning is a, “continuous process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues, with an intention of getting things done. Through Action Learning individuals learn with and from each other by working on real problems and reflecting on their own experiences” (p. 11).

Foy (1977) noted that Action Learning is based on three simple principles:

1. Mature people learn best when they are directly involved in real problems to which answers are not known.
2. One’s own experience, together with that of others, can be examined to help find solutions to major problems.
3. Learning by doing is particularly effective when a problem is tackled in an unfamiliar situation. (pp. 158–159)

Much of the credit for the concept and model of Action Learning is attributed to Revans (1980), who stated, “Action learning is about real people tackling real problems in real time, observing the impartial discipline of the business setting and looking after a lot of people” (p. 309). According to Revans (1997), “Action Learning not only makes explicit to the participant managers their own inner processes of decision, but makes them equally attentive to the means by which those processes effect changes in the world around them” (p. 12). Marquardt (1999) suggested that Action Learning gains its power and benefits from the interaction of the following six components:

- A Problem—Action learning is built around a problem, the resolution of which is of high importance to an individual, team, or organization.
- The Group—The core entity in action learning is the action learning group (also called a set or team). The group is composed of four to eight individuals who examine an organizational problem that has no easily identifiable solution.
- The Questioning and Reflection Process—By focusing on the right questions rather than the right answers, action learning focuses on what one does not know, as well as on what one does know. Action learning approaches problems through a process of asking questions, reflecting, and identifying possible solutions before taking action.
- The Resolution to Take Action—For action learning advocates, there is no real learning unless action is taken, for one is never sure the idea or plan will be effective until it has been implemented.

- **The Commitment to Learning**—In action learning, the learning is as important as the action. Action learning places equal emphasis on accomplishing the task and on the learning/development of individuals and organizations.
- **The Facilitator**—The facilitator, , is very important in helping participants reflect both on what they are learning and on how they are solving problems... The facilitator also helps participants focus on what they are achieving, what they are finding difficult, what processes they are employing, and what the implications of these processes are. (pp. 5–8)

Garratt (1997) suggested that the power of Action Learning “derives from releasing and reinterpreting the accumulated experiences of the people who comprise the organization” (p. 15). He later noted that this discharge of power to people within the organization and the allocation of problem solving to this group provides for more acceptance of the proposed solutions discovered by the group.

**Action research model.** Lewin (1946) also conceived the organizational change model known as action research. Lewin stated, “Action research proceeds in spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the results of the action” (p. 206). The action research model for planned change looks at change as though it is a cyclical process in which the initial research about an organization provides the framework for action. The results derived from the action are then assessed to provide further action, and so on. Reason and Bradbury (2001) suggested that action research, “seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern

to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities” (p. 1).

Cummings and Worley (2009) subscribe to the traditional eight-step model for action research. The eight steps are designed for use by the change facilitator in order to implement change within an organization. The eight steps involved with the traditional action research model are summarized by Cummings and Worley as follows:

1. **Problem Identification**—This step usually begins with a leader or person of influence within an organization sensing there may be problems in the organization.
2. **Consultation With a Behavioral Science Expert**—During this step, the client and change facilitator meet to discuss the cultural assumptions, values, and the frame of reference for the change project.
3. **Data Gathering and Preliminary Diagnosis**—In this step the organizational practitioner will gather data through interviews, observations, questionnaires, and performance data. The change agent will then base an initial diagnosis of the organization’s problems on the collected data.
4. **Feedback to a Key Client or Group**—The collaborative nature of action research mandates that the change facilitator report the findings to the client or leadership team.
5. **Joint Diagnosis of the Problem**—In this step, the organizational change facilitator and the leadership team or group work together to diagnose the core problems within the organization.

6. Joint Action Planning—At this step in the process, the organizational change practitioner and the leadership team or group begins to develop actions to be taken.
7. Action—This stage revolves around the transition from one organizational position to another.
8. Data Gathering After Action—The cyclical nature of action research forces the practitioner and the team to gather once again data at the end of the process to measure the effects of the actions taken and then they feed the results back to the organization. This may lead to another round of diagnosis and action.

**Organization development model.** Church, Waclawski, and Burke (2001) define organization development as “a planned process of change in an organization’s culture through the use of behavioral science technology, research, and theory” (p. 301). Rothwell and Sullivan (2005) added, “Organization development is a planned and collaborative process for understanding, developing, and changing organizations to improve their health, effectiveness, and self-renewing capabilities” (p. 172). Church et al. (2001) also suggested that organization development is based on the action research model for change, should be used to focus on changing an entire system, and consist of extensive data-based methods and well-integrated, reinforcing action plans. W. W. Burke (2008) noted that within the organizational development model for change, there are four specific techniques:

1. **Diagnosis**—This may consist of interviews with both individuals and groups and perhaps the use of a questionnaire and researcher observation, followed by examination and organization of the data collected.
2. **Feedback**—This step involves reporting back to those from who the data were obtained on the identifiable issues facing the organization.
3. **Discussion**—This step discusses the importance and implication of the data and plan the steps that should be taken as a consequence.
4. **Action**—The final step is to take the steps necessary to create new expectations and results.

W. W. Burke and Litwin (1992) developed a leading organization development model for change. Their casual model represents 12 of the key variables associated with organizational inputs and outputs. This model suggested that in accordance with systems theory, there is a connected interrelationship among these 12 variables, as a change in one variable, “will eventually have an impact on the others” (p. 528). They describe four of the factors as transformational meaning, “areas in which alteration is likely caused by interaction with environmental forces and will require entirely new behavior sets from organizational members” (p. 529). W. W. Burke and Litwin suggested the remaining eight factors should be considered transactional because their “primary way of alteration is via relatively short-term reciprocity among people and groups” (p. 530). The 12 variables that constitute the Burke-Litwin Causal Model of organizational performance and change are divided into transformational and transactional factors. The transformational and transactional factors include:



- External Environment—any outside condition or situation that influences the performance of the organization.
- Mission and Strategy—is what the organization's (a) top management believes and has declared is the organization's mission and strategy and (b) what employees believe is the central purpose of the organization.
- Leadership—is executives providing overall organizational direction and serving as behavioral role models for all employees. When assessing this category we would include followers' perceptions of executive practices and values.
- Culture—the collection of overt and covert rules, values, and principles that are enduring and guide organizational behavior.
- Structure—is the arrangement of functions and people into specific areas and levels of responsibility, decision-making authority, communication, and relationships to assure effective implementation of the organization's mission and strategy.
- Management Practices—are what managers do in the normal course of events to use the human and material resources at their disposal to carry out the organization's strategy.
- Systems—are standardized policies and mechanisms that facilitate work, primarily manifested in the organization's reward systems, management information systems, and in such control systems as performance appraisal, goal and budget development, and human resource allocation.
- Climate—is the collective current impressions, expectations, and feelings that

members of local work units have, that in turn, affect their relations with their boss, with one another, and with other units.

- **Task Requirements and Individual Skills-Abilities**—are the required behavior for task effectiveness, including specific skills and knowledge required of people to accomplish the work for which they have been assigned and for which they feel directly responsible.
- **Individual Needs and Values**—are the specific psychological factors that provide desire and worth for individual actions or thoughts.
- **Motivation**—is aroused behavior tendencies to move toward goals, take needed action, and persist until satisfaction is attained. The resultant net energy generated by the sum of achievement, power, affection, discovery, and other important human motives.
- **Individual and Organizational performance**—is the outcome or result as well as the indicator of effort and achievement. (pp. 531–533)

W. W. Burke and Litwin (1992) noted that the 12 variables chosen for their model, “need to be considered in any attempt to predict and explain the total behavior output of an organization, the most important interactions between these variables, and how they effect change” (p. 529). Bradford and Burke (2005) summarized organizational development as,

...a system wide process of planned change aimed at improving overall organization effectiveness by way of enhanced congruence of such key organizational dimensions as external environments, mission, strategy, leadership,

culture, structure, information and reward systems, and work policies and procedures. (p. 12)

**Kotter's model for planned change.** Kotter (1995) devised an eight-stage change strategy that is widely regarded as a major resource for leaders when implementing change. Kotter believed that the change process required strong leadership skills and a shared belief that the organization could be greater should it change and adapt. His eight-step strategy for change is as follows:

1. Create a sense of urgency: The leader must establish a motivating, compelling, and persuasive case that explains why the status quo must be changed.
2. Create a powerful guiding coalition: The leader should establish a group with enough power to lead the change effort while working as a team.
3. Create a powerful vision: A vision must be cast that will help direct the change effort and strategies for achieving the vision must be developed.
4. Communicate the change: The vision must be communicated by all means possible and the new and expected behaviors must be exemplified by the guiding coalition.
5. Empower others to act on the vision: Obstacles to change must be removed, systems or structures that undermine the vision must be changed, and the people in the organization must be encouraged to take risks and be creative.
6. Planning for and creating short-term wins: Visible performance improvements must be planned, created, and employees involved must be recognized and rewarded for working to achieve improvement goals.

7. Consolidate gains and produce still more change: Use the increased credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that don't fit the vision. Hire, promote, and develop employees who can implement the vision. Reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes, and change agents.
8. Institutionalize new approaches: The leader must articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success. Develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession.

**The seven S model.** Waterman, Peters, and Phillips (1980) developed a framework and model for change based on seven organizational components. They claimed that effective organizational change is, “really the relationship between structure, strategy, systems, style, skills, staff, and something we call super ordinate goals” (p. 17).

These seven components all beginning with the letter S are depicted as follows:

- Structure—Structure divides tasks and then provides coordination.
- Strategy—Those actions that a company plans in response to or anticipation of changes in its external environment.
- Systems—The procedures, formal and informal, that make the organization go, day by day, and year by year.
- Style—This refers to how the managers and leaders act and behave.
- Staff—The way the employees are treated and evaluated, their motivation, morale, and attitude, and how the organization develops future managers and leaders.
- Skills—The attributes and capabilities that exist within the organization.

- Super ordinate goals—The guiding concepts, a set of values and aspirations, often unwritten, that goes beyond the conventional formal statement of corporate objectives. The fundamental ideas around which a business is built (pp. 19–24).

Waterman et al. (1980) noted that their framework for change forces a change agent to focus on the interactions between the seven variables and that, “the pace of real change is geared to all seven S’s” (p. 26) and “the real energy required to redirect an institution comes when all the variables in the model are aligned” (p. 26). W. W. Burke and Litwin (1992) noted that “the strengths of the seven S model are (a) its description of organizational variables that convey obvious importance, and (b) its recognition of the interrelationships among all of these seven variables or, dimensions” (p. 524). They later noted its weakness by stating, “the 7S model, on the other hand, does not contain any external environment or performance variables” (p. 524).

### **Unplanned Change**

Weick and Quinn (1999) explained that the term “continuous change” is used, “to group together organizational changes that tend to be ongoing, evolving, and cumulative” (p. 375). Weick and Quinn (1999) later noted that “its distinctive quality is the idea that small continuous adjustments, created simultaneously across units, can cumulate and create substantial change” (p. 375). Wheatley (1992) suggested that organizations involved with continuous change have authority based on tasks rather than professional titles, self-organizing systems, flexible job descriptions, cultures adaptable to change in the moment rather than tied to traditional routines, and have accepted change as a continual component of the organization.

Weick and Quinn (1999) proposed that, “in the face of inertia, it makes sense to view a change intervention as a sequence of unfreeze, transition, refreeze. But in the face of continuous change, a more plausible change sequence would be freeze, rebalance, unfreeze” (p. 379). According to Marshak (1993), a different mind-set is required to see change as continuous as opposed to planned. Marshak proposed that this mind-set is based on the following assumptions: (a) patterns of ebb and flow repeat themselves; (b) movement involves an orderly process through a cycle and a departure from this cycle causes a disequilibrium; (c) there is no end state; (d) interventions are to restore organizational equilibrium and balance; (e) correct action creates harmony; and (f) the assumption that nothing within an organization remains the same for all time.

Weick (2000) stated the benefits of emergent change include, “its capability to increase readiness for and receptiveness to planned change and to institutionalize whatever sticks from the planned change; suitability for on-line real-time experimentation, learning, and sensemaking” (p. 227). Burnes (2004) proposed that proponents of the continuous transformation model of change argue, “In order to survive organizations must develop the ability to change themselves continuously in a fundamental manner” (p. 890). An organization’s strategic equilibrium is a combination of frequent incremental changes made in an improvisational way that may ignite strategic innovations that change the organization fundamentally (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998).

**Complexity and chaos.** Unplanned change is often grouped under the headings of Complexity Theory and Chaos Theory. Complexity theories are concerned with the emergence of order in dynamic nonlinear systems that are constantly changing and in which the laws of cause and effect do not appear to apply (Beeson & Davis, 2000;

Burnes, 2004; Haigh, 2002; Wheatley, 1992). Daft (1992) proposed that organizational complexity consists of three dimensions: (a) vertical complexity—the number of levels which exist in an organization’s hierarchical structure; (b) horizontal complexity—the number of job titles or departments within an entire organization; and (c) spatial complexity—the number of geographical positions within an organization. Demers (2007) depicted the complexity perspective, “conceives organizational change as an ongoing process involving a number of counteracting forces whose interaction often moves the system to the edge of chaos or drives it to chaotic equilibrium” (p. 170). The complexity approach offers a synthetic way to gauge change management as the tension between opposing forces within an organizational system (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998; Demers, 2007; Levy, 1994; Stacey, 1995; Thietart & Forgues, 1995). It is because of these contradictory pressures that the organization fluctuates between stability and change, and suggested that periods of stability may be the exception within complex organizations (Demers, 2007; Dubinskas, 1994).

Cawsey and Deszca (2007) adapted Stacey’s (1996) underlying fundamentals of complexity theory into the following summary:

- Organizations are webs of nonlinear feedback loops that are connected with other individuals and organizations by webs of nonlinear feedback loops.
- These feedback loops can operate in stable and unstable states of equilibrium, even to the point at which chaos ensues.
- Organizations are inherently paradoxes. On one hand, they are pulled toward stability by forces for integration and control, security, certainty, and environmental adaptation. On the other hand, they are pulled toward

instability by forces of division, innovation, and even isolation from the environment.

- If organizations give in to the forces for stability, they become ossified and change impaired. If they succumb to the forces for instability, they will disintegrate. Success is when organizations exist between frozen stability and chaos.
- Short-run dynamics (or noise) are characterized irregular cycles and discontinuous trends, but the long-term trends are identifiable.
- A successful organization faces an unknowable specific future because things can and do happen that affect what is achieved and how it is achieved.
- Agents within the organization cannot control (through their actions, analytic processes, or systems and controls) the long-term future. They can act only in relation to the short-term.
- Long-term development is a spontaneous self-organizing process that gives rise to new strategic directions. Spontaneous self-organization is the product of political interaction combined with learning in groups, and managers have to pursue reasoning through the use of analogy.
- It is through this process that managers create and come to know the environments and long-term futures of their organizations. (p. 81)

According to Demers (2007), chaos theory “studies deterministic nonlinear systems whose behavior appears random but is, in fact, orderly and bounded” (p. 155). Lorenz (1993) designates chaos as the, “processes that appear to proceed according to chance, even though their behaviour is in fact determined by precise laws” (p.4). Demers



(2007) suggested it is at the verge of chaos, “where occasionally one small change can trigger a large change in outcome, but most small changes produce only small effects, can the organization potentially attain a really improved position and, once there, maintain its advantage” (p. 160). Demers (2007) summarized the thoughts surrounding chaos theory in the following statement:

When at the edge of chaos, organizations are constantly changing, and no one in the organization controls the change process completely. Managers can act to influence change (by setting the system’s parameters), but they cannot know in advance what the outcomes of their actions will be, because feedback produces surprising effects. (p. 160)

Wheatley (2006) noted, “When chaos erupts, it not only destroys the current structure, it also creates the conditions for new order to emerge” (p. 16). Wheatley (1999) stated, “It is chaos’ great destructive energy that dissolves the past and gives us the gift of a new future....Only chaos creates the abyss in which we can recreate ourselves” (p. 119). Wheatley suggested, “A system can descend into chaos and unpredictability, yet within that state of chaos the system is held within boundaries that are well-ordered and predictable. Without the partnering of these two great forces, no change or progress is possible” (p. 13).

Cutright (2001) suggested there were four principles that form the basis of chaos theory. These four are summarized as follows:

- Sensitivity to initial conditions—This is the principle that the system is influenced by its own feedback, which modifies the system and makes predictability within an organization possible only for short time frames.

- Strange Attractors—This principle suggests that randomness and pandemonium are not constrained within a parameter of boundaries by forces at work within the organization.
- Self-Similarity—This principle means that although all things within a system are subject to change, there is always some organizational qualities that will remain the same.
- Self-Organization—This principle refers to the system’s ability to evolve over time and find a balance between complete randomness and chaos, and complete order and inertia.

According to Bechtold (1997), organizations which navigate chaos with democratic prowess are characterized “by a balanced distribution of power, strong customer focus, an integration of management and doing, a strategy of continuous learning, and an orientation towards community service” (p. 199). Allen (2001) discussed that complexity and chaos systems thinking models in organizations address “the ‘what might be’ rather than the ‘what is’ or ‘what will be’” (p. 41). Burnes (2005) posited that managing and changing organizations appears to be “getting more rather than less important” (p. 85).

**Disruptive change.** Disruptive change is another term often assigned to unplanned change within organizations. Selsky and McCann (2010) defined disruptive change as, “severe surprises and unanticipated shocks that may significantly destabilize the organization” (p. 175). Christensen and Overdorf (2000) noted that in dealing with disruptive change in organizations, what managers often lack “is a habit of thinking about their organization’s capabilities as carefully as they think about individual people’s

capabilities” (p. 68). Christensen (1997) argued that many organizations tend to be decent at responding to evolutionary changes, but they tend to struggle with revolutionary and disruptive changes. Christensen and Overdorf (2000) proposed that when faced with disruptive changes, leaders must create an environment for new processes and innovations to flourish. They suggested the following three strategies for creating the best setting for success in times of disruptive change:

- Create new organizational structures within corporate boundaries in which new processes can be developed.
- Spin out an independent organization from the existing organization and develop within it the new processes and values required to solve the new problem.
- Acquire a different organization whose processes and values closely match the requirements of the new task. (p. 73)

Selsky and McCann (2010) posited that there were three broad categories of disruption within organizations: operational, competitive, and contextual. Operational disruption involves the normal fluctuation of supply, demand, cost, and price for an organization’s goods and services over time. Competitive disruptions are exhibited in the jostling of position within and between organizations that may lead to changes in strategic plans, actions, and a consistent comparison to others. Contextual disruptions are considered to be the unknown events and situations that happen in an organization and to its people. They later suggested that these unknowns may produce both destructive consequences and valuable opportunities.

## Change Strategies

As the scholarly research has increased in the field of organizational change and leadership, a plethora of change methods, processes, and strategies have emerged from the literature. It is imperative for the change agent to evaluate the organization objectively in order to select the proper model for each specific situation. In order to help navigate the myriad of change models and strategies currently available, Holman, Devane, and Cady (2007) suggested seven characteristics to consider as a framework for determining the model or strategy necessary for a particular change undertaking. The characteristics are summarized as follows:

1. Purpose—The change agent or leadership must first identify the aim and focus of the change work in order to ensure the intention of the project is met.
2. Type of System—In order to select the best model or strategy for change, the leader must understand the type of system as a whole and the type of people who will be involved with the change.
3. Event Size—Another characteristic to consider is the size of the group involved in the change process.
4. Duration—A fourth characteristic that needs to be considered in the change process is the amount of time, pace, and the sense of urgency associated with the change.
5. Cycle—It is also imperative to determine the cycle of change linked to the particular change. The leader must observe whether the change cycle needs to be as needed, periodic, or continuous.

6. Practitioner Preparation—The sixth characteristic to reflect on is the change leader’s preparation and readiness to implement a change in the organization.
7. Special Resource Needs—The change agent must address the resource needs a transformation process and plan will require in order to determine the proper change model or strategy.

Holman et al. (2007) have identified more than 60 change models, strategies, and methods. This study will investigate seven well-known strategies for leading change in organizations. In the following sections we will explore Appreciative Inquiry, Environmental Scanning, Future Search, Open Space Technology, Whole System Approach, The World Café, and Storytelling as strategies for creating change within the organizational setting.

**Appreciative inquiry.** A major strategy being utilized in the area of action research and organizational change is Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Cooperrider first introduced the concept of AI in the mid 1980s, and remains the leading scholar in the field. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) proposed a practice-oriented definition of AI:

Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative, coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives life to an organization or a community when it is most effective and most capable in economic, ecological, and human terms....AI involves the art and practice of asking unconditionally positive questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential....AI links the knowledge and energy of this [positive] core directly to

an organization or a community's change agenda, and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized. (p. 8)

The traditional model for AI, the 4-D appreciative learning model, is a dynamic and interactive approach used by leaders seeking to find the best attributes of an organization in order to bring about positive change. Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2008) suggested the 4-D Cycle of AI involves four steps:

- **Discovery**—The first step in the AI process is to discover and value those factors that give life to the organization. During this step, individuals share in a dialogue focused on discovering the best things about the organization. The intent of the discovery stage is to help members of the organization make the transition from individual appreciation to collective appreciation and ultimately a shared vision for the organization (Cooperrider, et al. 2008).
- **Dream**—The second step in the AI process is to dream, or envision what might be possible for the organization. Cooperrider et al., (2008) noted, “envisioning involves passionate thinking, creating a positive image of a desired and preferred future” (p. 6).
- **Design**—In the third step of the AI process, participants work together to build the future of the organizational design in which the extraordinary becomes the expected and routine. The design stage leverages the past successes of the organization with those observed in other organizations to clarify the strategies needed to achieve the dream and seeks to determine the ideal future for the organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

- **Destiny**—The fourth component of the AI process seeks to inform the organization and the participants in the process of what it will take to sustain the change. At this stage, the organization is empowered to make things happen, make the necessary adjustments, and determine just what the new change will be and needs to look like. During this stage, the members of the organization find innovative ways to move the organization closer to the shared vision (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) also developed a list of the five principles of AI that helped to move the basis of AI from theory to practice. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) later added three principles to Cooperrider and Whitney's (2005) initial list for a more complete description of how AI works as a strategy for leading change in organizations.

The eight principles of AI, can be summarized as follows.

1. **The Constructionist Principle**—With an understanding that organizations are living, human creations, we are able to grasp the power that members of organizations can create their sense of reality (Cooperrider et al., 2008).
2. **The Principle of Simultaneity**—Inquiry and change are not separate moments but simultaneous. Seeing that the questions asked by change leaders generate the questions necessary to see the good of what is, but also a brighter and possible future (Cooperrider et al., 2008).
3. **The Poetic Principle**—An organization's story is constantly being coauthored. Moreover, pasts, presents, and futures are endless sources of learning, inspiration, or interpretation (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 9)

4. The Anticipatory Principle—This principle proposes that our positive images of the future lead our positive actions. This principle also suggests that the image of the future guides any organization’s current behavior (Cooperrider et al., 2008).
5. The Positive Principle—Momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding—attitudes such as hope, and sheer joy of creating with one another (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.9).
6. The Wholeness Principle—This principle suggests the familiarity of wholeness brings out the best in people, relationships, communities, and organizations. Wholeness refers to the whole story, the whole system, and the whole person and is fundamental to leading participants in AI to comprehend, acknowledge, and enjoy diversity. This permits the participants to center on the superior good of the organization and on what is good for the whole (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).
7. The Enactment Principle—The seventh principle of AI offers that transformation occurs by living in the present what we most desire in the future. Put more simply, positive change comes about as images and visions of a more desired future are enacted in the present (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 68).
8. The Free-Choice Principle—The final principle of AI posits that people and organizations excel when the people involved are allowed and free to choose the extent and nature of their contribution...the freedom to choose liberates



both personal and organizational power (Whitney & Trosten Bloom, 2010, p. 71).

AI has proved to be a successful strategy for change, as it seeks to bring out the positive within an organization and involve people at all levels. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) stated that the practice of AI entails conversations that matter and bringing positive change to life and helps “transform one-way, top-down communication into open, whole-system dialogue” (p. 75).

**Environmental scanning.** In order to observe an organization’s readiness, willingness, potential for change, and before a leader can begin to strategize for change, it is imperative to observe the entire environment of the organization. Albright (2004) asserts that environmental scanning is the internal communication of external information about issues that may impact an organization’s decision-making processes and suggested that the identification of emerging issues, situations, and potential pitfalls can help to guide in an organization’s strategic planning.

There is academic research on the use of environmental scanning as a strategy for organizational change and learning. Choo (2002) studied the observations on scanning as a strategy for change and summarized the findings as follows:

1. Situational dimensions: The effect of perceived environmental uncertainty.

Leaders and managers who feel the environment to be more uncertain will tend to employ more scanning..

2. Organizational strategy and scanning strategy. An organization’s overall strategy is connected to the complexity and reach of its scanning actions. It is

necessary for scanning to be able to provide the information necessary to create and pursue the chosen plan of action.

3. **Managerial traits: Unanswered questions.** Research has shown there to be little confidence about the effects of the manager's job-related and cognitive traits on scanning. Upper-level managers tend to do more environmental scanning than do lower-level managers.
4. **Information needs: The focus of environmental scanning.** Most studies observe scanning in a variety of environmental sectors: social, political, and economic.
5. **Information seeking: Source usage and preferences.** Managers typically prefer to scan with personal sources as opposed to formal sources.
6. **Information seeking: Scanning methods.** Organizations scan using an array of methods, depending on the organization's size, familiarity with scanning, and the industry or sector of which the organization is part.
7. **Information use: Strategic planning and enhanced organizational learning.** Research reveals that environmental scanning done well is linked to enhanced organizational development and success.

There are several models of environmental scanning that have proved to be effective strategies for organizations seeking to implement change and understand where they will need to focus their attention. In this literature review, two models for environmental scanning, Bolman and Deal's (2008) Four Frames and Schmieder-Ramirez and Mallette's (2007) SPELIT model will be noted.

***Four frames.*** Bolman and Deal (2008) developed a framework for looking at the environmental components of an organization with the entire system in mind. They developed four frames that serve as filters for sorting out the realities of an organization, the best ways to navigate through an organization, and as tools for solving problems and accomplishing tasks. The four frames are structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. The structural approach focuses on the architecture of an organization, its design, rules, policies, roles, and goals. The human resource lens emphasizes understanding people, their strengths and weaknesses, emotions, desires, and fears. The political view looks at organizations as groups of people with competing interests, consistent power struggles, and quests for limited resources. The symbolic frame focuses on issues of meaning, faith, and looks for an organization's commitment to its rituals, ceremonies, history, and culture.

***SPELIT.*** Schmieder-Ramirez and Mallette (2007) collaborated with colleagues to develop another framework for scanning not only the environment of the organization, but also the leadership of the individuals involved, called the SPELIT Power Matrix. This tool seeks to investigate an organization from social, political, economic, legal, intercultural, and technical perspectives. The social component looks at how the members of the organization interact with each other and how the structures set in place by the organization create the social environment. The political aspect of this tool seeks to investigate the way an organization deals with competing interests, viewpoints, values, and assumptions. The economic piece to the SPELIT matrix looks at the facts of where the organization is financially. The legal analysis is important to an environmental scan because it allows the observer to know how procedures are made and policies are

governed within the organization. The intercultural element of this scanning tool observes an organization's ability to navigate cultural differences. Surveying an organization's use of technology is critical to understanding the culture's resources and any possibly areas of inefficiency.

**Future search.** Future search is often used as a strategy for organizational change that utilizes a whole-system approach in a short and intense meeting format designed to allow a diverse and widespread group of organizational members to have a say in addressing the change. Weisbord and Janoff (2010) proposed that future search usually involves 60 to 80 people or more, meeting in half-day segments, spread over a 3-day period. The meetings are set up to discuss five different phases—Past, Present, Future, Common Ground, and Action Planning—associated with future search change. Groups are designed for people to work in functional teams and in mixed groups representing a cross-section of the organization and each person is encouraged to be included in the dialogue during each phase.

Weisbord and Janoff (2007) described the process of future search during these whole-system meetings in a task-by-task framework. The afternoon of the 1st day, the groups focus on the organization's past during task one and focus on the present and external trends during task two. The morning of the 2nd day, continues task two by first looking at stakeholder response to external trends and then focusing on the present and owning the organization's actions. The afternoon session of day two typically begins with task three, which seeks to identify ideal future scenarios and ends with task four and an attempt to identify common ground. The morning of day three begins with a continuation

of task four and seeks to confirm common ground. Task five then involves the discussion of action planning.

Weisbord and Janoff (2007) summarized the four principles of future search as follows:

- Have the right people in the room—that is, a cross-section of the whole, including those with authority, resources, information expertise, and need.
- Create conditions in which participants experience the whole system before acting on any single part of it.
- Focus on the future and seek common ground.
- Enable people to take responsibility for their own learning and action plans.

(p. 319)

Weisbord (1992) developed future search and he traces its roots back to the research and writings of K. Lewin & G. W. Lewin (1948) regarding action research, the Schindler-Rainman and Lippitt's large-scale community futures conference, and the pioneering work of Emery and Trist (Boonstra & De Caluwe, 2007; Weisbord & Janoff, 2007). Schindler-Rainman and Lippitt (1980) provided the insight to get the entire system in the room and focus on the future, not on the troubles and struggles within an organization. From the work of F. E. Emery and Trist (1960) and M. Emery and Purser (1996) and their development of the Search Conference, it was noted that a requirement for finding common ground is working with a small group of stakeholders in meetings lasting several days. During these meetings, the participants were presented with a broad view of the common history of the entire system, and encouraged to think globally before acting locally (Boonstra & De Caluwe, 2007; Weisbord, 1992).

**Open space technology.** Brigham (1996) suggested that Open Space Technology is different as a change strategy than Future Search because it has no planned agenda, no specific exercises, and no limit to the number of people who can be involved. Bryson and Anderson (2000) noted that Open Space operates under the following four assumptions: (a) events must focus on a specific issue of concern and, as the purpose becomes clear, the structures developed will align with the purpose; (b) people can and will self-organize and leadership will emerge, as each participants' views become part of the agenda; (c) the expertise needed for solutions is found among the participants; and (d) the chaos associated with these types of events provides an opportunity for organizational growth, learning, and increased effectiveness.

Owen (2007) developed the concept of OST and based the strategy on four principles: (a) whoever comes are the right people; (b) whatever happens is the only thing that could have; (c) whenever it starts is the right time; and (d) when it's over, it's over. Owen (2007) posited that there is only one law associated with Open Space, The Law of Two Feet, which states, "If you feel you are neither contributing nor learning where you are, use your two feet and go somewhere else" (p. 141).

Owen (2007) noted that Open Space is successful because of the participants' passion and responsibility. According to Owen passion "engages the people in the room" (p. 139) while "responsibility ensures that things get done" (p. 139). Owen detailed the Open Space process as a participant-driven process where everyone interested in passionately and responsibly participating is who needs to be included. The participants are grouped in a circle and are invited to bring forth any issue or topic related to the session's overall theme. As the individuals have issues come to mind, they are

encouraged to walk to the center of the circle and write the issue on a piece of paper, attach it to the wall, and announce the issue to the group. After all issues have been brought up, the entire group is then invited to sign up for the issues they are passionate about and for which they will take responsibility. The group then begins to manage itself over the remainder of the 3-day event. At the conclusion, the groups come back together and work to prioritize the issues. The most pressing issues are then developed with greater detail and a concrete action plan is put together to accomplish new goals.

Owen (2007) identified three important roles associated with Open Space: sponsor(s), facilitator, and participants. Owen suggested the role of the sponsor is to devise the invitation, support the logistics, honor and respect all the participants, welcome each participant, provide the context, spotlight the intention, support the results, and remain open to where the experience moves the organization. Owens identified the key tasks of the facilitator as working with the logistics team to build the space, coaching the leadership on the styles of working that will materialize in Open Space, opening and holding space, supporting the emergence of innovation and maintaining the spirit of the event, and aid the leadership and organization in functioning with chaos and self-organization. Owens also identified the roles played by the participants' within Open Space. He noted participants need to take accountability for what they love, listen and talk genuinely, follow through on pledges, and employ the four Open Space principles and one law throughout the process.

**Whole system approach.** Another strategy for leading change in an organization is called the Whole System Approach (WSA). Adams and Adams (2007) developed WSA as “a framework for effectively weaving multiple organizational change initiatives

into a well-designed, highly effective, coherent whole” (p. 442). They suggested that “the purpose of WSA is to achieve organization-wide change and large-scale employee engagement, buy in and results through enhanced leadership, and employee commitment and accountability” (p. 442).

Adams, Adams, and Bowker (1999) stated that in order to maximize productivity, “people must be motivated, inspired, and personally connected to the work they do. This productive state can be realized, in part, by giving employees a voice in how they do their work” (p. 20). This serves as the foundation for the WSA. Adams and Adams (2007) advise that the WSA framework is particularly valuable when:

1. A need to change fundamentally or transform is evident;
2. A number of existing efforts require integration into a comprehensive whole;
3. Large-scale engagement/commitment of all constituencies is desired;
4. A new organizational focus is required;
5. A new possibility could potentially yield significant value or enhanced capability; and
6. Current efforts lack speed, results, or broad ownership. (p. 443)

Adams and Adams (2007) developed a four-phase framework for transformation and the sustainability of change. The four phases of the WSA approach to change are summarized as follows:

- Set the stage—In this phase, the change catalyst must create a case for change, institute vision, build capability to lead change, and develop infrastructure to lead change.



- Change the business—During this phase of the WSA, the change leader must communicate and engage employees; develop skills, incentives, resources, and action plans; design new processes, systems, and behaviors; develop new infrastructure for the organization; and carry out project implementation strategies.
- Transition—In this phase of the WSA, one must focus on program management, embrace newly designed methods and systems, and stop old behaviors.
- Run the business—During the final phase of the WSA, it is imperative that the leadership uphold key elements of the new organization, seek to improve continuously the new organization, conduct performance reviews, make the necessary corrections, and seek learning and feedback.

The WSA, while not discussed as often in the literature as some other strategies for change, has proved to be an effective method for leading change in an organization.

**The world café.** Another strategy used by organizations to create change is called the World Café. Brown, Homer, and Isaacs (2007) describe the World Café as a, “conversational process, based on a set of integrated design principles that reveal a deeper living network pattern, through which we coevolve our collective futures” (p. 180). Brown et al., suggested that as a conversational process, the World Café is a, “simple methodology that can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, increasing people’s capacity for effective action in pursuit of common aims” (p. 180). They later noted, “The integrated design principles evoke collective intelligence through dialogue...helping people at all levels of a system develop greater collective

capacity to shape their futures through conversations that matter” (p. 180). As a living network pattern, the World Café helps people answer questions through conversations, which “enable us to learn, create shared purpose, and shape life-affirming futures together” (p. 181).

In the World Café conversations, tables of four people are scattered throughout a room to discuss and explore a question or topic that is pertinent to their work and organization. After a period of 20 to 30 minutes, participants change tables leaving one holdover at each table. This holdover shares with the new people at the table the main components of the previous group’s discussion. The conversation is started anew with each group and the process is repeated several more times. The components of each conversation are then brought together to help formulate a collective intelligence, which provides a basis for innovative possibilities and action, and a new sense of shared meaning, vision, and direction for change (Brown et al., 2007).

Brown et al. (2007), through their research, discovered seven principles that when brought together help to create the conditions necessary for there to be success through the World Café process.

1. Set the context—Clarify the purpose and parameters within which the dialogue will unfold.
2. Create Hospitable Space—Assure the welcoming environment and psychological safety that nurtures personal comfort and mutual respect.
3. Explore Questions That Matter—Focus collective attention on powerful questions that attract collaborative engagement.

4. Encourage Everyone's Contribution—Enliven the relationship between the me and the we by inviting full participation and mutual giving.
5. Cross-Pollinate and Connect Diverse Perspectives—Use the living system dynamics of emergence through intentionally increasing the diversity of perspectives and density of connections while retaining a common focus on core questions.
6. Listen Together for Patterns, Insights, and Deeper Questions—Focus shared attention in ways that nurture coherence of thought without losing individual contribution.
7. Harvest and Share Collective Discoveries—Make collective knowledge and insight visible and actionable. (p. 187)

**Storytelling.** In regard to change in an organization, Tichy (2002) wrote, “The best way to get humans to venture into unknown terrain is to make that terrain familiar and desirable by taking them there first in their imaginations” (p. 219). Denning (2007) suggested that there are eight principles that govern efforts to stimulate desire for change:

- the underlying idea should be worthwhile for its own sake
- the communication tool must make the idea memorable
- the idea must be the audience's own idea
- the audience needs room to contribute
- the idea must be positive
- the idea must be positive for the particular audience
- the more useful communication tools tend to be stories

- communication tools in general are effective when they generate a new story in the mind of each listener. (pp. 168–169)

Simmons (2006) discussed the role storytelling plays in human psychology by stating, “Story also moves people to a very young state of awareness that is less analytical, more receptive, and better connected to their unconscious and imagination. This allows you and your message to enter their minds” (p. 126). Sarbin (as cited in Crossley, 2002) proposed, “Human beings think, perceive, imagine, interact and make moral choices according to narrative structures” (p. 46). Crossley stated, “The concept of narrative can be used to help account for the observation that human beings always seek to impose structure on the flow of experience” (p. 47). Simmons (2006) described the psychological impact of storytelling as being a “pull strategy” (p. 108) compared to more forceful “push strategies” (p. 108). Simmons also noted “Learning to influence through story dramatically improves the leverage of your efforts” (p. 108) and “story has a quality of graciousness that bypasses power struggles” (p. 108).

Gargiulo (2006) posited that there are three functions of stories in regard to communication: (a) Stories empower a speaker and create an environment as they can catch the listeners’ attention, serve as a platform for learning, and build a relationship between the speaker and the audience; (b) Stories are a great way to predetermine information, as it can be distributed in concise and easily absorbed portions; and (c) Stories are utensils for thinking, as each story draws attention to details associated with the past, makes the present meaningful, and provides a glimpse of the future. Stories from the past can be joined together to help establish associations with people, and establish future actions. According to Treleaven (2001), stories “facilitate connections between a

storyteller's past and imagined futures, creating potential for new ways of being and acting in the world" (p. 267). Simmons (2006) stated, "Before you can influence you must establish some connection. Story builds connections between you and those you wish to influence. Broader and stronger connections enable broader and stronger communications to flow between you" (p. 116).

McKinnon (2008) offered that with change, "leaders can leverage stories to engage employees in meaningful ways. Those stories that recognize employees' cares and concerns, while acknowledging the past and building positive anticipation about the future, can become a continual self-guided change tool" (p. 18). Gabriel (2000) posited the following as a depiction of stories within organizations:

Stories are narratives with plots and character, generating emotion in narrator and audience, through a poetic elaboration of symbolic material. This material may be a product of fantasy or experience, including an experience of earlier narratives. Story plots entail conflicts, predicaments, trials, coincidences, and crises that call for choices, decisions, actions, and interactions, whose actual outcomes are often at odds with the characters' intentions and purposes. (p. 239)

Mai and Akerson (2003) suggested that the stories told within organizations to promote change should be action oriented, link the listeners to a shared set of values, cast the organization's people as characters, cast the competition as the antagonist, portray the past as a prologue to a new story, portray the present as the beginning of a quest to fulfill a new vision, and portray the future as a place where goals are accomplished and renewed. Fineman, Gabriel, and Sims (2010) proposed that organizations have used storytelling in a variety of ways, including:

- as part of an organization's sense-making apparatus
- as a feature of organizational politics, attempts at control, and resistance
- as symbolic artifacts expressing deep mythological archetypes
- as performances aimed at influencing hearts and minds
- as a means of disseminating knowledge and learning. (p. 439)

### **Storytelling and Change**

Boje (1991) proposed that organizational stakeholders “tune into stories as real-time data and tell stories to predict, empower, and even fashion change” (p. 124).

Simmons (2006) suggested that there are six types of stories that leaders should utilize in order to influence others:

1. “Who I Am” stories
2. “Why I am Here” stories
3. “The Vision” story
4. “Teaching” stories
5. “Values-in-Action” stories
6. “I Know What You Are Thinking” stories. (p. 4)

McKinnon (2006) noted that stories can be an asset in addressing significant change within organizations if leaders will consider utilizing them in the following ways:

- Create the vision: Craft future stories and use illustrated story maps to bring the story to life and to encourage others to join in. Employ stories as metaphors for challenges and benefits.

- Make a positive beginning: Share stories to uncover what the organization really is, what it specifically must become, and to affirm what will not change. Evoke stories to understand what people value.
- Step off the edge into the future: Use stories to communicate the need for change and let go of limiting identity perceptions. Tell past success stories as proof the organization is capable of changing.
- Shift resistance and accelerating change: Find stories that turn abstract conceptual ideas into images that clarify purpose, inspire shared meaning, and promote trust and engagement.
- Break through to new perceptions: Use stories to promote a new paradigm, open up new perceptions about work, and sustain the change.
- Be willing to be human: Telling authentic stories or acting them out can strengthen respect and cooperation, inspire courage and fresh insights, and affirm employees' emotional connections to the organization. (p. 106)

Weick (2001) suggested that stories are important to help “register, summarize, and allow reconstruction of scenarios that are too complex for logical linear summaries to preserve” (p. 341). In other words, stories help many people within organizations to make sense of what is happening. Sutherland and Dawson (2002) defined sensemaking as “a set of ideas emanating from the fields of psychology and organization studies that seeks to reveal how individuals construct meaning, interpret their world, and function within it” (p. 52). Gephart (1991) proposed that both storytelling and sensemaking are interpretive practices, and “sensemaking is often accomplished through storytelling” (p. 35). Denning

(2007) noted, “The desire for change may wane unless it is supported and reinforced by compelling reasons why the change makes sense and should be sustained” (p. 36).

Wheatley (1999) stated, “We need to understand all change results from a change in meaning. Meaning is created by the process of self-reference. We change only if we decide that the change is meaningful to who we are” (p. 147). Pfahl and Wiessner (2007) suggested, “Storytelling involves making meaning by seeing new relationships and patterns of thought. Using storytelling intentionally offers a powerful strategy for helping targeted populations of learners articulate, choose, and commit to more effective life options” (p. 11). Weick (2001), a leading scholar in the field of sensemaking and a proponent of storytelling as a key ingredient in organizational sensemaking, developed a listing of the seven key properties of sensemaking. A brief explanation of these seven properties of sensemaking helps to clarify the value of storytelling as a strategy for leading change.

1. *Social Context*: Sensemaking is influenced by the actual, implied, or imagined presence of others....To change meaning is to change the social context.  
When social anchors disappear and one feels isolated from a social reality of some sort, one’s grasp of what is happening begins to loosen.
2. *Personal Identity*: A person’s sense of who he or she is in a setting; the threats, opportunities to enhance, and continue in a setting all help to provide a center from which all judgments of relevance and sense fan out.
3. *Retrospect*: Sensemaking is influenced by what people notice from past events, how far they look back, and the quality of their memory of what they were doing in a previous setting similar to the present.



4. *Salient Cues*: People tend to be resourceful in how they elaborate tiny details and indicators into full-blown stories, which typically result in a reassurance of an initial hunch. When these cues become contradictory or unstable, people may begin to lose their grasp for what is going on.
5. *Ongoing projects*: Sensemaking is constrained not only by a recollection of past events, but also by the speed with which events flow into the past and interpretations become outdated. As people lose their ability to bind current events, to keep pace with them by means of continuous updating of actions and interpretations, or to focus on interrupting conditions, they begin to lose a grasp on what is happening around them.
6. *Plausibility*: Sensemaking is about coherence of a situation, how events go together, and credibility. The goal of making sense is to determine “what’s the story here?” or “what’s a story here?”
7. *Enactment*: Action is a means to gain some sense of what one is up against. When actions are not taken or minimal, it becomes difficult to grasp what one might be facing. (p. 461)

Weick (1995) summarized these seven elements of the sense-making process in regard to how it helps in creating change by stating, “once people begin to act (enactment), they generate tangible outcomes (cues) in some context (social), and this helps them discover (retrospect) what is occurring (ongoing), what needs to be explained (plausibility), and what should be done next (identity enhancement)” (p. 55). Mai and Akerson (2003) noted that stories that help people make sense of change typically let people know “where the organization is going, why the change is necessary and

important, what specific steps will need to be taken, how people can help make the change a success, and what's in it for them" (p. 70).

A review of the literature on storytelling and leading change must include a reflection on the work of Bakhtin in regard to dialogue in organizations. Bakhtin and Holquist (1981) proposed dialogue as a tool to overcome the boundaries of tradition and help move the organization into a place where change can take place. Bakhtin and Holquist suggested that cultures were dynamic and continually renegotiated through the relationship between one's self and others through language, dialogue, communication, and change. Heierbacher (2007) noted that Bakhtin's work on dialogism "emphasized the power of discourse to increase understanding of multiple perspectives and create myriad possibilities...and that dialogue creates a new understanding of a situation that demands change" (p. 112).

Boje (1991), a leading scholar on storytelling organizations, posited, "In organizations, storytelling is the preferred sensemaking currency in human relationships," (p. 106) and suggested people within organizations, "tell stories about the past, present, and future to make sense of and manage their struggles with their environment" (p. 124). Boje noted that members of storytelling organizations continually tell and refine the stories of their current events while also reinterpreting the traditional stories ingrained within the organization's culture. The old organizational stories are retold at times of decision making in order to minimize repetition of organizational missteps and to promote the repetition of positive experiences. He proposed that in a chaotic organizational environment, the stories told help to create a mind-set for a more positive vision and reality for the organization. Boje suggested organizational stakeholders "tune

into stories as real-time data and tell stories to predict, empower, and even fashion change” (p. 124) and “performed stories not only to make sense of their setting but to negotiate alternative interpretations and to accommodate new precedents for decision and action” (p. 124).

Rosile and Boje (2002) noted, “A strategy is an organization’s story about how it will enact its resources to enact some future” (p. 273). Lessem (1998) suggested, “Restorying involves a change not merely in the individual events of your work and life themselves, but in your master story. When such change happens, it is a genuine reformation or even transformation” (p. 396). Denning (2007) proposed, “A simple story about an example showing where the change is already happening can connect with an audience at an emotional level and generate a new story in their own minds that leads to action” (p. 171). Rosile and Boje (2002) identify seven steps to demonstrate how a storytelling-based strategy for change may be applied on the personal and organizational levels. Their seven steps for restorying, or change, are as follows:

- Characterize—Describe the organization at its best, if it were functioning perfectly and living up to all its ideals.
- Externalize—What is the problem, viewed as separate from any individual, as an external entity?
- Sympathize—What remunerations does the organization gain from the problem?
- Revise—Drawbacks of the problem, predetermined benefits , reasons to change.

- Strategize—Find a distinctive outcome from times past , even a possible outcome that allowed the organization to conquer the problem.
- Rehistoricize—Make the unique outcome the expected norm in a new story of freedom from the problem.
- Publicize—Enroll support for the new story. Use letters, ceremony, and other means of publicity. (pp. 273–275)

### **Change in Higher Education**

Temple (2006) suggested that change in higher education must be thought of as more than just brand or reputation management. He offers that change in higher education should have more to do with a strategic vision for the university and striving to achieve that vision by involving a period of intervention, “to change real things so as to achieve better teaching, research, physical facilities, and all the rest—the serious management of the university” (p. 18). Winstead (1982) offered that change in higher education is the “process of altering, modifying, or transforming; and it may involve termination, growth, substitution, replacement, or simply passing from one phase to another” (p. 19). Guskin and Bassis (1985) suggested change is often slow and difficult within universities because the traditions and cultural norms of the academy are sacred and their organizational constructs are so disjointed that change is particularly difficult for them to achieve. Keller (1983) suggested that American higher education has entered a new era that requires better planning, strategic decision making, and more directed change. His research proposes that in order to accomplish this type of transition, colleges and universities need to develop new procedures, attitudes, and organizational structures.

In regard to the necessity of change in higher education and the serious nature for which it should be considered, W. W. Burke (2008) stated:

In the domain of higher education, which includes some of the oldest, most traditional types of organizations in the world, the external environment is changing. Unless colleges and universities adapt, their traditions may not last, at least not for the centuries they have in the past. (p. 17)

One must consider the causes of and reasons for change in higher education.

Christenson (1982) proposed that colleges and universities need to be conscious of the forces that affect them and, “speculate on the changes that will occur, trace backward from the future to the present the implications of the changes, and then plan what actions they will take to address the future they have hypothesized” (p. 5). Guskin and Bassis (1985) refer to the changes in enrollment demographics, declining levels of financial support, and increased expectations of students, parents, and employers as external forces for change in higher education. Farmer (1990) suggested the internal and external pressures for change in higher education have created an environment more conducive for “colleges and universities to ask which changes they must make, rather than whether or not changes will be required” (p. 7). Steeples (1990) asserted that universities must “either be changed by external events or attempt to direct their own destinies through purposeful change” (p. 102).

Keller (1983) deduced that there were three stimulants for change within institutions of higher education. The first stimulant involves a major crisis in finances, enrollments, or quality, which may mandate quick, decisive, and intelligent action. The second stimulant for change involves strong pressure from the outside in the form of

influential alumni, the press, key trustees, or an accrediting or governing agency. Keller suggested a third stimulant for change is the visionary and far-sighted urging for transformation that comes from an influential campus leader such as the university president, academic vice-president, or key faculty members.

Farmer (1990) discussed three conditions necessary for successful change initiatives on college and university campuses. He proposed that there must first be a condition of trust between faculty members and an institution's administration and that these two groups must see each other as partners in higher education and not competing foes. The second condition he believed was essential for successful change is a strong commitment from the top levels of campus leadership. He suggested that it is the responsibility of the university leadership to establish an environment conducive for innovation and an organizational culture that expects change to occur. Farmer's third essential condition for change in higher education details the importance of effective planning that can bridge the gap between an institution's vision for the future and its current reality. Farmer recommended that the planning process was necessary to help translate the vision into specific objectives and strategies for implementation.

**Challenges of change in higher education.** In his work on planned change in higher education, Winstead (1982) suggested there are both pressures for change and maintenance of the status quo within any academic institution. He recommended that a list of the forces that work against change in higher education would have to include faculty members' loyalty to their academic disciplines, the rigidity of the faculty tenure system, higher education's traditionally weak leadership structure, and longstanding traditions. Winstead also described two of the main internal problems that may derail a

planned change initiative in the academy as the distribution of power in an institution and the lack of adequate communication between the institutional constituencies. Farnsworth (2007) explained that leadership in academia typically comes from within and often comes from faculty members who tend to be the most resistant to change. He realized that as this line of succession in leadership continues, the leaders would have been brought up in the very philosophies that make the faculty change resistant.

Farmer (1990) stated, “Resistance to change is particularly intense in higher education because faculty members are instinctively hyper conservative about educational matters” (p. 7). In his work on institutional renewal with higher education, Fuller (1985) suggested that no one should underestimate the resistance and suspicion any large change initiative will encounter within the academic community where the questions and investigation are encouraged to bring validity to attractive ideas.

Trachtenberg (2009), in regard to the university of the future, described the role that change will play in higher education as follows:

Change will be incremental in many ways, dramatic in others. Higher education is a dynamic, living entity, and it will have to become even more flexible and more change accommodating than in the past. Institutions cannot risk the chance of becoming obsolete, and so universities will simply have to adapt. (p. 18)

The work of Ramaley and Holland (2005) discussed the often-resistant nature of academic organizations to change. They assert that deep change can occur within academic organizations if both the campus leader and the campus community define intentional change as a scholarly act strongly rooted in a culture of organizational learning. Ramaley and Holland developed a five-element framework for minimizing the

resistance to change in higher education: (a) build a compelling case for change, (b) create clarity of purpose, (c) work in a scholarly mode at a significant scale, (d) develop a conducive campus environment, and (e) understand change.

Christenson (1982) described the difficulty of organizational change in higher education as being based on the larger and more diverse role that colleges and universities are being asked to play in American society. This increased pressure is coupled with consistent enrollment concerns, increased political and governmental participation in the business and finance of higher education, a constant quest for increased financial resources, and a lack of ability to preserve the best of the traditional model of the academy while at the same time a desire to strike out in new and innovative directions. Gilley, Fulmer, and Reithlingshoefer (1986) proposed that a major component of an organizational story involves the commitment of its staff to the institution. They emphasized that in seeking to further an institution, it is imperative to have a shared sense of purpose in the strategic mission of the university. As individual and institutional goals are realized, greater recognition is gained and faculty, staff, and students take a new pride in the institution.

**Chaos, complexity, and strategic planning in higher education.** Colleges and universities are complex and chaotic systems, with multiple layers and components ingrained and at work within the institutional culture. Barnett (2001) noted that there are three distinct species of complexities associated with colleges and universities: conceptual complexities, environmental complexities, and relational complexities.



- **Conceptual Complexities**—Complexities concerned with values, ends, purposes, ideas, concepts, objectives, and goals: all are open, contestable, and challengeable and they are contested and challenged.
- **Environmental Complexities**—Complexities concerned with the uncertainty and unpredictability of the total environment within which the university conducts its work. Income streams, stakeholders, and rival institutions offering knowledge services in knowledge society and the university's activities toward and forms of engagement with its wider environment are all open. Even the boundaries of that environment become fuzzy, both in terms of their extension and in terms of their distinctiveness (the external world has come into the university and the university acts within the external world such that the internal-external distinction is quickly evaporating).
- **Relational Complexities**—Complexities concerned with relationships and modes of communication and associated identities of persons: the idea of a university as a unitary community now seems lost. Again, relationships, communication, and identity come into play both within the university and in its interactions with its wider environment. (p. 17)

Swenk (2001), in her discussion on strategic planning, chaos theory, and its relation to higher education, noted that strategic planning in higher education should be considered a conscious process during which the institution takes a strong look at its current realities in comparison to its desired future. She suggested that strategic planning in higher education must constitute an adaptation to the external events surrounding the institution and should be thought of as a problem-solving device and an opportunity for

the university to create a framework for the problem-solving solutions. She insisted that universities understand the deliberate nature of the strategic planning process and the need to have congruity between culture and process.

Swenk (2001) also noted that there are elements of chaos theory that are particularly relevant to strategic planning in higher education. She referred to chaos theory's principles of self-similarity, strange attractors, self-organization, and sensitivity to initial conditions as the conditions in which new structures can emerge. She suggested, "The sensitivity principle reveals that another reason institutions of higher education (systems) are chaotic and unpredictable is because feedback iterates back into the system (the institution) itself" (p. 40). Swenk posited that while higher education is stereotyped as being slow to change, institutions cannot prosper or withstand the current increasing rates of change without coming to an understanding of chaos theory and its place in strategic planning. Those familiar with chaos theory will have a better grasp on the fact that unpredictable changes are not only possible, but typical. Swenk commented, "As uncomfortable as this can be, remembering that chaos and disequilibrium are not abnormal can help participants resist abandonment of their goals and purposes" (p. 45). Ray (1997) declared, "Colleges and universities must view their goals and plans as constantly changing within their context of an institution that asks, and keeps on asking, fundamental questions" (p. 22). According to Matthews, White, and Long (1999), the consideration of the many unpredictable factors that influence the institution can tend to move people away from the tendency to focus on their predetermined goals and plans. They suggested strategic planners should know that trying to produce change in a chaotic

system such as higher education can be “gradual, incremental, evolutionary or sudden, discontinuous and revolutionary” (p. 47).

The nature of chaos theory has shown to be well suited for change in higher education. The academic freedom and critical thinking inherent in the academic setting provides a great foundation for understanding chaos theory in higher education. As mentioned above, the differing perspectives and agenda between the university faculty and the administration often lead to resistance to change and strategic planning. Newton (1992) stated that this conflict may be the result of the corporate culture of the academic administration and the much different academic culture. He also suggested that major differences between the academic and administrative cultures on the same campus are linked to the belief the administration wants to make quick decisions and plans, while the faculty is bent on deliberating the process and wants to have ample conversation before acting. Swenk (2001) noted that the combination of chaos theory and strategic planning “may be the best way of alleviating the views of faculty and administrators who view planning as futile since the future cannot be predicted because the emphasis shifts to a flexible process of identifying and managing change” (p. 51).

**Strategies and models for change in higher education.** As universities have begun to compare similarly to their counterparts in the for-profit sector, many of the traditional models have been implemented to create change in academic institutions. Academic institutions have begun to think and plan strategically in order to keep up with their competition and prepare for an uncertain future. Shirley (1988) observed an increase in the number of colleges and universities recognizing the necessity to plan strategically in order to realize their desired institutional vision. Shirley stated that the vision of a

university “should seek to develop the optimal relationship between institutional capabilities and values, on the one hand, and environmental needs and opportunities, on the other” (p. 5). Steeples (1990) offered that strategic planning in higher education requires an ongoing assessment of an institution’s strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities in order to maximize institutional strengths.

A leader in academic strategic thinking, Keller (1983), asserted that university leaders seeking to create change on their campus must “shift their attention and energy gradually to the long-term interests of their institutions and their increasingly competitive and difficult environments” (p. 165). Keller discussed six factors that distinguish academic strategic planning from others previous incarnations of change initiatives in higher education:

1. Academic strategic decision-making means that a college, school, or university and its leaders are active rather than passive about their position in history.
2. Strategic planning looks outward and is focused on keeping the institution in step with the changing environment.
3. Academic strategy making is competitive, recognizing that higher education is subject to economic market conditions and to increasingly strong competition.
4. Strategic planning concentrates on decisions, not on documented plans, analyses, forecasts, and goals.
5. Strategy making is a blend of rational and economic analysis, political maneuvering, and psychological interplay. It is therefore participatory and highly tolerant of controversy. (pp. 143–148)

Winstead (1982) a key figure in the exploration of planned change in higher education wrote that any planned change program in an educational institution should include (a) receiving information from the constituencies served by the institution; (b) a devised process whereby information can be processed in a way that agreement on what the information means can be reached and revised by the constituencies; (c) formulated plans and programs designed to achieve the organizational goals and objective; (d) the implementation of the appropriate actions to accomplish the goals and objectives; and (e) an honest evaluation of the actions taken.

Winstead (1982) combined the works of Bennis, Benne, and Chin (1961) and Gardner (1964) to introduce a five-step concept for change in higher education. Winstead suggested change in the context of higher education “deals with developing new and better processes and relationships in response to changing needs and expectations” (p. 20). His concept for change in higher education can be summarized as follows:

1. There is a need to create planning mechanisms for renewal and redirection to counteract the built-in bias of complex institutions to maintain the status quo.
2. There is a need for leadership within an institution to initiate and encourage these mechanisms.
3. Renewal mechanisms should be based on valid knowledge and objective research.
4. Renewal mechanisms should include an internal planning specialist to facilitate the change process.
5. There should be a consciousness of the desired direction and extent of movement in the whole system rather than isolated interventions. (p. 19)

### **Storytelling as a Strategy for Leading Change in Universities to Increase Prestige**

The literature is limited in regard to the use of storytelling as a strategy for leading change in institutions of higher education. However, several of the key components of storytelling as a change strategy can be compared to issues related to all organizations, including higher education institutions. According to Martorana and Kuhns (1975), strategy for innovation in higher education “starts with concepts of goals and proceeds to the question of overall design” (p. 163). Farmer (1990) noted, “Innovations introduced in a college or university should assist in translating its strategic vision into reality. Meaningful change is much more than merely cosmetic it is tantamount to renewal...and involves transforming the culture of an organization” (p. 7). Kaye (1996) substantiated the role storytelling can play in an institution seeking to create change and pursue a new vision when he stated, “Stories can shape the culture of organizations. Through stories and myths, we can form images of the organization and judge whether it is healthy or ailing...myths support rituals, communicate values and help leaders envisage the future” (p. 63).

Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt (2005) suggested it is challenging to comprehend and conceptualize how change in universities is created. They noted that the main questions involved with change in higher education seek answers to “how one can ‘make sense’ of change in universities and how the people in charge of managing change are making sense of it in the face of the contradictory situation of necessity for and resistance to change” (p. 77). Simmons (2006) noted, “Story makes sense of chaos and gives people a plot. One of the ways that story influences people is that a story can reframe frustration, suffering, or extra effort as meaningful” (p. 37). In institutions of higher education where

resistance to change is likely generated by a fear of the professional unknown, Ylijoki (2005) reminded her readers that “creating, telling and negotiating stories and narratives is a key process through which members make sense of events and experiences within a given organizational context and through which they form their professional identities” (p. 558). Mai and Akerson (2003) posited that the storytelling of leaders performs several functions in the quest for meaning making: providing meaning to experiences that lack meaning in themselves, discovering an underlying theme or subject, providing justification and legitimacy for actions taken, and bringing closure after change has occurred.

As noted earlier, change in institutions has been stereotyped as difficult and slow, but also inevitable and imperative for the American university. Argyris (1976) stated, “The probabilities of implanting educational processes that threaten the status quo are always low and disheartening” (p. 20), but Keller (1983) adds, “The chances are increased if in trying, to change a university’s strategy, the president recognizes that he needs to change the attitudes of its main actors” (p. 150). Denning (2007) posited, “It’s only if the participants in the new structure begin to live a new story that the new behaviors take and the culture changes” (p. 174). Boyce (1995) stated that stories and storytelling are symbolic form “by which groups and organizational members construct shared meaning and collectively centre on that meaning” (p. 107).

H. Bowen and Schuster (1986) noted that to improve chances of faculty members’ interest in institutional changes being positive that, “reasonable involvement of faculty and communication with them are critical in the decision-making process of any college or university” (p. 22). Denning (2007) suggested that effective stories can help deliver the

reasons for change by including the following: (a) the story of what the change is, often seen through the eyes of some typical characters who will be affected by the change; (b) the story of how the change will be implemented, showing in simple steps how we will get from here' to there; and (c) the story of why the change will work, showing the underlying causal mechanisms that make the change virtually inevitable. Martorana and Kuhns (1975) expanded on the concept of engaging the campus constituencies in institutional change initiatives in the following statement:

Changes that aim at increased participation by students and faculty members in decisions affecting their own work may not be best implemented through strategies and tactics limited to administrative directives, just as innovations that aim at more systemic planning and experimentation can probably be best achieved through systematic planning and experimentation themselves. (p. 163)

In linking storytelling transitions to the transitions that take place within organizations, including higher education institutions, during times of change, Parkin (2004) developed a framework for better understanding the nature of storytelling as a change strategy. Her comparisons help to demonstrate the similarities associated with change in organizations of all types, which should include universities.

1. Once upon a time...—The organization has been operating in the same way for some time.
2. Then one day...—Internal or external forces dictate the need for change. These forces may have been unpredictable or completely unanticipated.
3. Because of this...—The organization may change its vision, its product, its people, its location, to respond to the challenge.



4. The climax...—The organization plans, communicates, and implements the changes and makes steps in its new direction.
5. The resolution...Periodic reviews are carried out to assess success or otherwise.
6. ...and the moral of the tale is...—The organization, by periods of reflection, can learn valuable lessons.
7. The characters' lives are not the same—Subsequent challenges are handled differently; individuals may have grown, although some may not have survived the change. (pp. 7-8)

### **Conceptual Framework**

A synthesis of the literature revealed that, as Weick (2001) stated, storytelling helps to “register, summarize, and allow reconstruction of scenarios that are too complex for logical linear summaries to preserve” (p. 341). Three characteristics appear throughout the literature on storytelling as a change strategy and provide the conceptual framework for this study: framing, sensemaking, and restorying.

**Framing.** McKinnon (2006) proposed that stories help the members of an organization to have a better understanding of where the organization truly is, what it must do to change, and to affirm what will stay the same. Bakhtin and Holquist (1981) suggested that dialogue as a communication tool helps prepare an organization to find a foundation where change can take place. Boje (1991) noted that people within organizations often use stories to demonstrate where change is needed and also to help prepare for the oncoming changes. According to Kaye (1996), stories can help to frame an organization's current situation and may help its leaders to envision a new future for

the organization. Boyce (1995) proposed stories provide the foundation for organizations to come together and find a common sense of meaning and purpose.

**Sensemaking.** Gephart (1991) suggested that oftentimes an organizations' ability to make sense of change is through storytelling. According to Weick (2001), "sensemaking is about coherence of a situation, how events hang together, certainty that is sufficient for present purposes, and credibility" (p. 462). Weick proposed the goal of making sense is to determine "what's the story here" (p. 462) or "what's a story here" (p. 462). Fineman et al. (2010) proposed that storytelling can be used as part of an organization's sense-making efforts. According to Mai and Akerson (2003), stories help people within organizations understand change by letting them know where the organization is headed, why the change is imperative, the specific plan for implementation, and informs them of the value found in its success. Boje (1991) noted that people within organizations tell stories to help each other make sense of the realities found within their organizational surroundings. Simmons (2006) posited that stories help people to make sense of the chaotic conditions often associated with change in organizations.

**Restorying.** Gargiulo (2006) noted that storytelling serves as a stage for learning and gives identity to the new future. Treleaven (2001) proposed that stories help people to see a new way in which they can act and live within their environments. Lessem (1998) posited that restorying and change within an organization requires a commitment to the transformation of the organization's story. Rosile and Boje (2002) suggested restorying should include a description of the organization at its best, identify the current area in need of change, define the benefits that will come from a change in that area,

explain the reasons for change, remind the organization of previous successful changes, make the new outcomes the expected norm, and seek support for the new story.

According to Denning (2007), stories about the change can bring a new story into people's minds that might instigate action. McKinnon (2006) stated stories can help people within organizations to see new perspectives and opportunities resulting from the change, which helps to legitimize the transformation. The following Table presents the major storytelling characteristics associated with the conceptual framework along with the key authors associated with each storytelling element.

Table 2

*Storytelling Characteristics and Change*

Storytelling Characteristics and Change	Key Authors
Framing	Bakhtin & Holquist (1981); Boje (1991); Boyce (1995); Kaye (1996); McKinnon (2006); Weick (2001)
Sensemaking	Fineman et al. (2010); Gephart (1991); Mai & Akerson (2003); Simmons (2006); Weick, (2001)
Restorying	Boje (1991); Denning (2007); Gargiulo (2006); Lessem (1996); McKinnon (2006); Rosile & Boje (2002); Treleaven (2001); Weick (2001)

## Summary

Chapter 2 began with an overview of the American university system and its governance and structure, university finance, academic curriculum and instruction, and a depiction of university students. These issues were discussed in a historical and contemporary context and were designed to provide a foundation and framework for better understanding American higher education and its place in society. This overview was followed by a section detailing university prestige. This section sought to compare and contrast university prestige and university reputation, illustrate the value and cost of seeking prestige, and provide a summary of the key components of university prestige.

The chapter then shifted in focus from higher education to a review of the literature on organizational change. A review of the organizational change literature revealed the challenges often associated with change, and depicted the impact organizational culture plays in the midst of change. This was followed by a section that summarized both planned and unplanned change. The organizational change portion of the literature review was concluded with a summary of seven different strategies used within organizations to create change: Appreciative Inquiry, Environmental Scanning, Future Search, Open Space Technology, Whole Systems Approach, The World Café, and Storytelling. A larger section was dedicated to the literature associated specifically with storytelling and change.

The literature review then made the transition to an exploration of change within institutions of higher education. The literature provided a thorough examination of the difficulties found with implementing change in higher education. The literature also provided for a section detailing chaos and complexity theory in higher education, as well

as a brief discussion on strategic planning as seen in colleges and universities. This portion of the literature review concluded with examples of strategies and models for change that have been designed and utilized within institutions of higher learning.

The next section of the literature review discussed storytelling as a specific strategy for leading change in order to increase university prestige. There was found to be a lack of scholarly literature on this specific topic, but there was a brief summary of the role that storytelling can have in higher education change initiatives based on the literature suggesting that storytelling is a powerful tool for change in organizations. A conceptual framework was established based on the premise that storytelling can be an asset in organizational change, as it assists people in framing what is going on within the organization, making sense of the changes introduced, and restorying, or committing, to a new way of doing things (Weick, 2001). This literature review has provided the background and framework for gaining new insights into the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to identify storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. There are many theories and strategies associated with leading change in higher education. This study describes storytelling strategies for leading change based on the interview responses of higher education leaders who have experienced change in their institutions. This study presented the responses of higher education leaders as they depict the role that storytelling strategies have played in their experiences with organizational change initiatives. The information compiled in this research is presented in a narrative style as is consistent with qualitative research. Appropriate methods were also undertaken to ensure the content reliability and validity of the research.

#### **Organization of the Chapter**

This chapter presents in detail the methodology used to conduct this study. Chapter 3 begins by describing the nature of a qualitative study and narrative research. The DNA to qualitative research is introduced as the method used to collect the qualitative data for the research. This chapter also discusses the research questions and sampling strategies used to identify the participants in this study. Chapter 3 includes a section describing how the human subjects involved with the research were protected. The chapter then moves into a brief discussion of the data collection strategies and the steps taken to ensure validity and reliability throughout the research study. The methodology chapter concludes with a detailed description of the data analysis and data display techniques associated with this research and a general summary of the chapter.

## **Nature and Design of the Study**

**Qualitative research.** A qualitative research design and methodology was chosen to identify the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige as experienced by higher education leaders. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) suggested, “Qualitative research is typically used to answer questions about the nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants’ point of view” (p. 94). Hatch (2002) noted that qualitative studies involve the “lived experiences of real people in real settings” (p. 6). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative researchers “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Creswell (2007) stated that in qualitative research, “the final report provides for the voices of participants, a reflexivity of the researchers, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and a study that adds to the literature or provides a call for action” (p. 51).

Kirk and Miller (1986) suggested that qualitative research is composed of the following four phases:

- Invention denotes a phase of preparation, or research design; this phase produces a plan of action
- Discovery denotes a phase of observation and measurement, or data collection; this phase produces information
- Interpretation—denotes a phase of evaluation, or analysis; this phase produces understanding

- Explanation denotes a phase of communication, or packaging; this phase produces a message. (p. 60)

Patton (2002) noted, “Qualitative methods permit inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail, context, and nuance; that data collection need not be constrained by predetermined analytical categories contribute to the potential breadth of qualitative inquiry” (p. 227). Creswell (2007) proposed, “Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37). Patton (1990) noted, “Practical applications of qualitative methods emerge from the power of observation, openness to what the world has to teach, and inductive analysis to make sense out of the world’s lessons” (p. 139). There are six common types of qualitative research: (a) basic qualitative study, (b) phenomenology, (c) grounded theory, (d) ethnography, (e) narrative analysis, and (f) critical qualitative research (Merriam, 2009).

Patton (1987) proposed six questions a researcher should ask when selecting a research method:

1. Who is the information for and who will use the findings?
2. What kinds of information are needed?
3. How is the information to be used? For what purposes is evaluation being done?
4. When is the information needed?
5. What resources are available to conduct the evaluation?



6. Given answers to the preceding questions, what methods are appropriate? (p. 8)

In light of Patton's six questions, a narrative approach was selected for gathering data associated with the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige.

**Narrative research.** Polkinghorne (2007) stated, "narrative research is the study of stories" (p. 471). Polkinghorne (2007) depicted narrative research as having two separate performances: (a) the collection of evidence, and (b) the analysis or interpretation of the evidence. Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested that narrative inquiry "provides researcher with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories" (p. 3). Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, and Morales (2007) indicated that narrative research is one of the leading approaches to qualitative research studies and suggested it is useful to differentiate between types of narrative research by the "analytic strategies that authors use" (p. 243). Barone (2001) suggested that narrative research is similar to good literature, as it "causes us to question our values, prompts new imaginings of the ideal and the possible. It can even stir action against the conventional, the seemingly unquestionable, the tried and true" (p. 736).

After studying the many narrative forms of inquiry, Polkinghorne (1995) designated the two basic forms as:

- (a) analysis of narrative, that is, studies whose data consist of narratives or stories, but whose analysis produces paradigmatic typologies or categories; and
- (b) narrative analysis, that is, studies whose data consist of actions, events, and happenings, but whose analysis produces stories. (p. 5)

Merriam (2009) proposed, “Narrative analysis uses the stories people tell analyzing them in various ways, to understand the meaning of the experiences as revealed in the story” (p. 23). Patton (2002) suggested, “The central idea of narrative analysis is that stories and narratives offer especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings” (p. 116).

Hatch (2002) noted that types of narrative studies may include, “life histories, story research, biography, personal experience methods, oral history, and narrative inquiry” (p. 29). Researchers utilizing narrative approach position personal stories within the participants lived experiences and their cultural and historical background (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Merriam (2009), “The key to this type of qualitative research is the use of stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience told in story form having a beginning, middle, and end” (p. 32). Creswell (2007) stated, “Narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals” (p. 55). Czarniawska (1998) suggested that narrative analysis has become a common approach to studying organizations especially in regard to four elements:

Organizational research that is written in a storylike fashion (“tales from the field”), organizational research that collects organizational stories (“tales of the field”), organizational research that conceptualizes organizational life as story making and organizational theory as story reading (interpretive approaches), and disciplinary reflection that takes the form of literary critique. (p. 13)

## **Dynamic Narrative Approach**

Patton (2002) suggested:

[The] task for the qualitative researcher is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking. (p. 21)

For the purposes of this study the DNA was selected as the type of qualitative approach. Hyatt (2011) suggested the DNA, “reduces aspects of researcher influence and bias, increases transparency, portends the capacity for global participation, and offers a democratizing approach to participants, while simultaneously providing an opportunity for all involved to be *au fait* relative to the process” (p. 15).

The DNA is a contemporary research method used to link the past and present in order to change the future. It is based on the compilation of narrative and story through technology, and crosses the foundations of the ancient Renga storytelling traditions, and modern complexity and emergence theories (Hyatt, 2011). While similar to other narrative methods, DNA distinguishes itself by utilizing the Internet to provide a forum for multiple participants to provide responses to researcher-proposed questions through an alternating pattern, with each response made visible to all participants.

**Renga.** Renga is an ancient Asian form of narrative in which multiple people participate together in order to tell a story. Hyatt (2011) noted that a Renga begins with a single individual writing the first stanza of a story and with set criteria for syllables and lines. Another person follows the first with similar criteria parameters. A third person then follows repeating the structure of the first person and the fourth person repeats the

pattern of the second, and so on and so on, with each participant participating in the alternating pattern until the Renga story is complete. Hyatt also noted, “Most integral to the success of Renga are the emergence of thematic elements” (p. 9).

As a form of qualitative research, the DNA contains many of the fundamental elements associated with the traditional methods of narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) posited, “Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (p. 20). Patton (1990) stated, “Direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents’ depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions” (p. 24). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) suggested, “Stories stand between the abstract and the particular by mediating the basic demands of research along with the personal aspects” (p. 337).

The DNA utilizes fundamentals of Renga to gather participants’ responses to interview questions. Through virtual technologies, the participants’ stories and narratives are brought together and the data collected in the DNA process are displayed by e-mail or on a secured WIKI or Web site (Hyatt, 2011). Hyatt noted that in the DNA, “participants are active collaborators and the study assumes dynamic qualities, becoming a living document with naturally emerging themes” (p. 15).

**DNA and technology.** Neuman (1997) suggested that many researchers conducting qualitative research are utilizing technology to assist in the data collection and analysis of data. Willis and Jost (1999) suggested there are four categorical areas in which computer technology can assist in qualitative research: (a) sources of information and collaboration, (b) sources of data, (c) ways to assist in communicating results, and (d)

data analysis. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted both advantages and disadvantages to utilizing the Internet to conduct qualitative research. They proposed that the advantages in using the Internet include reduced cost and time, quick response, easy follow-up, and the ability to survey a large population. McMillan and Schumacher suggested the disadvantages for using the Internet to conduct qualitative surveys include limited sampling, lack of confidentiality and privacy, and low response rate.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. Leaders in higher education served as the sample for the completion of this study.

The following research questions were explored in this study:

1. How is storytelling defined by higher education leaders?
2. What are the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige?
3. How are framing, sensemaking, and restorying evidenced?

### **Sources of Data**

The study utilized purposeful sampling in order to select university leaders who had at least 1 year of experience in a leadership role. Koerber and McMichael (2008) proposed that purposeful sampling implies, “researchers have some degree of choice in selecting their research sample and that they have a clear purpose that guides their choice” (p. 466). Patton (1990) stated the “purpose of purposive sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 169). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) noted that in purposeful sampling, “people or other units are chosen, as the name implies, for a particular purpose” (p. 206). Participants for this study

were selected because of their lived leadership experiences in the academic university setting and their exposure to changes in higher education.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) suggested that the selection of a sample size in qualitative research “is related to the purpose, the research problem, the major data collection strategy, and availability of the information-rich cases” (p. 328 ) and qualitative sample sizes can range “from 1 to 40 or more” (p. 328). Patton (1990) proposed, “Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 184). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) also provided the following guidelines for determining sample size: (a) purpose of the study, (b) focus of the study, (c) primary data collection strategy, (d) availability of informants, (e) redundancy of data, and (f) researchers submit the obtained sample size to peer review.

For the purposes of this study, a small sample of university leaders was drawn from senior leadership administrators who were identified by the rank of president, provosts-vice president, or academic dean. Each participant was selected based upon the following criteria: (a) at least 1 year of experience as a senior leader at a university, (b) current employment in a leadership position at a regionally accredited institution, (c) current leadership position in a not-for-profit institution located within the United States of America.

Every effort was made to use the strategy of maximum variation to illuminate different aspect of the research problem (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to Patton (1990), maximum variation is a strategy for purposeful sampling that “aims at

capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation” (p. 172). Maximum variation was targeted in this study by interviewing university leaders from a diverse grouping of institutions based on size, geography, and institutional type.

In an effort to secure a qualified participant grouping, the snowballing strategy for sampling was also used. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described snowballing as a “strategy in which each successive participant or group is named by a preceding group or individual” (p. 327). Noy (2008) elaborated on the snowballing sampling process by stating, “This process is, by necessity, repetitive: informants refer the researcher to other informants, who are contacted by the researcher and then refer her or him to yet other informants, and so on” (p. 330). Participants identified during the early stages of this research project were asked to refer to the researcher other university leaders whom they felt might fit the participation criteria.

The identity of each participant was assigned an identifying code (Participant A through Participant K), and the name of the university of which they are employed was never identified in order to maximize confidentiality. This level of confidentiality enabled the participants to respond openly, and helped to provide the researcher with significant insight into their vast experience and perspective in regard to storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige.

### **Protecting Human Subjects**

Patton (1990) suggested that research involving qualitative research methods and human subjects, especially in settings such as education, therapy, and development and involving change, should include the following core principles:

1. Each person or community is unique.
2. Each person or community deserves respect.
3. Equity, fairness, and mutual respect should be foundations of human interactions.
4. Change processes (and research) should be negotiated, agreed to, and mutually understood—not imposed, forced, or required.
5. One expresses respect for and concern about others by learning about them, their perspective, and their world—and by being personally involved.
6. Change processes should be person centered, attentive to the effects on real people as individuals with their own unique needs and interests.
7. Emotion, feeling, and affect are natural, healthy dimensions of human experience.
8. The change agent, therapist, or researcher is nonjudgmental, accepting, and supportive in respecting others' right to make their own decisions, and live as they choose. The point is empowerment of others, not control judgment.
9. People and communities should be understood in context and holistically.
10. The process (how things are done) is as important as the outcomes (what is achieved).
11. Action and responsibility are shared; unilateral action is avoided.
12. Information should be openly shared and honestly communicated as a matter of mutual respect and in support of openness as a value. (p. 124).

Information should be openly shared and honestly communicated as a matter of mutual respect and in support of openness as a value.



As a condition of funding, government agencies have established monitoring standards for institutions engaged in research involving human subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). It is the policy of the Pepperdine University, Institutional Review Board (2010) that, “all research involving human participants must be conducted in accordance with accepted ethical, federal, and professional standards for research and that all such research must be approved by one of the university’s Institutional Review Boards” (p. 1). All research conducted in conjunction with Pepperdine University and utilizing human subjects is subject to the principles set forth by the Belmont Report.

The Belmont Report is based upon three ethical principles, which are fundamental in regard to the protection of human subjects involved in research: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

**Respect for persons.** The respect for persons principle is divided into two separate ethical considerations (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010): “first, that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and second, that persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection” (p. 1). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) noted that the respect for persons section “reiterates the codes’ demands that subjects enter the research voluntarily and with adequate information about the experiment’s procedures and possible consequences” (p. 140).

Respect for persons involves the concept of informed consent, which consists of three fundamental elements: (a) information, (b) comprehension, and (c) voluntariness. Information refers to the amount of knowledge the participant is given before a decision is made to participate in the study and is based on the researchers’ willingness to describe the procedures, their purposes, the risks and benefits, alternative procedures, and the

ability to withdraw at any moment from the study. The comprehension component in this clause suggests that the subject must be able to understand the information provided to them. A participants' voluntariness to participate in the study must be derived without coercion or improper influence (Institutional Review Board Guideboard, 1993).

**Beneficence.** The second ethical principle found in the Belmont Report details the consideration of the human subjects' well being during the study. The Belmont Report obligates researchers to uphold two basic rules in regard to beneficence and human subjects: (a) do not harm; and (b) maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

Each participant in this study received and signed an informed consent form prior to participation. The form utilized in this study was based upon the recommendation of Leedy and Ormrod (2005) who stated that an informed consent document should contain the following: (a) a brief description of the nature of the study; (b) a brief description of what participation will involve, in terms of activities and duration; (c) a statement indicating that participation is voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty; (d) a list of any potential risk and/or discomfort that participants may encounter; (e) the guarantee that all responses will remain confidential and anonymous; (f) the researcher's name, plus information about how the researcher can be contacted; (g) an individual or office that participants can contact, should they have questions or concerns about the study; (h) an offer to provide detailed information about the study; (i) a place for the participant to sign and date the letter, indicating agreement to participate. (p. 101)

A copy of the Informed Consent to Participate in Research is provided in Appendix A.

**Justice.** Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that the third ethical principle, justice, “insists on fair distribution of both the benefits and burdens of research” (p. 140). The subjects chosen for participation in this study were selected using the same set of standards, which gave validity to the sample selection process. Each participant was also made aware of the same benefits and risks associated with their decision to be included in this study.

The element of justice was utilized during the participant selection process. Participants were chosen based on their experience as leaders in higher education and not because of any personal traits that may not be appropriate for the completion of scholarly qualitative research. In an effort to maximize this study, researcher bias did not serve as a factor in participant selection.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher completed the National Institute of Health IRB training course. This is evidenced by the certificate of completion found in Appendix B. An application was approved by the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board seeking an exempt status because of the low levels of risk associated with this study.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection for this study began in Chapter 2 with a review of the relevant literature associated with storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. The literature review attempted to summarize the known and applicable theories related to leading organizational change, storytelling, and change in higher education. However, there was limited literature on successful storytelling strategies for leading change

specifically in university prestige. The DNA was used to collect data from university leaders.

The data helped to develop a foundation for understanding storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. Leaders who voluntarily consented to participate in this study were provided with an interview instrument consisting of semistructured questions. The participants were assigned a letter and responded electronically using the DNA method. This approach to narrative research utilizes computer technology as a data collection tool and provides a secure space for participants to respond to the questions (Hyatt, 2011). The DNA research method required the researcher to organize the participants in an order for which they were to respond to the questions. In Renga, concepts link contributions together. For the purposes of this study, responses were linked together by the interview questions.

### **The Instrument**

The interview instrument was designed to bring about responses related to the purpose of the study, and to identify storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. Patton (1990) proposed, “For purposes of qualitative inquiry, good questions should, at a minimum, be open ended, neutral, singular, and clear” (p. 295). Following these guidelines, an instrument was designed to be useful in collecting the responses from the lived perspectives of university leaders. The questions were developed with the intention of providing the participants with the opportunity to share their stories, thoughts, and opinions, openly and honestly. The questions were designed to elicit rich, thick responses, which would address the studies’ research questions. The DNA was used to conduct the study through a secured password protected Wiki. The

researcher set up the schedule and order for responses, and was available to provide clarification to any questions the participants may have had.

### **Validity and Reliability**

In an effort to insure the objectivity of the research study, instrument validity and reliability were used. Kirk and Miller (1986) noted, “Reliability is the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out; validity is the extent to which it gives the correct answer” (p. 19). Patton (1990) stated, “The validity and reliability of qualitative data depend to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher” (p. 11).

**Validity.** The concept of validity in narrative research varies from other research methods. Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested, “Narrative research aims for its findings to be well grounded and supportable...and does not claim to represent the exact truth, but rather aims for verisimilitude—that the results have the appearance of truth or reality” (p. 4). In regard to validity and the use of a narrative approach to research, Polkinghorne (2007) proposed the following:

The purpose of the validation process is to convince readers of the likelihood that the support for the claim is strong enough that the claim can serve as a basis for understanding of and action in the human realm. Narrative research issues claims about the meaning life events hold for people. It makes claims about how people understand situations, others, and themselves. (p. 476)

In conducting narrative research, there are potential threats to the validity of the study. Polkinghorne (2007) suggested threats to validity in narrative research arise because of a disjunction between the participants’ experienced meaning and his or her

description of the story. Polkinghorne noted four sources for this disjunction: (a) the limits of language to capture the complexity and depth of experienced meaning; (b) the limits of reflection to bring notice to the layers of meaning that are present outside of awareness; (c) the resistance of people because of social desirability to reveal fully the entire complexities of the felt meanings of which they are aware; and (d) the complexity caused by the fact that texts are often a cocreation of the interviewer and participant.

***Face and content validity.*** Leedy and Ormrod (2005) described face validity as the “extent to which, on the surface, an instrument looks like it’s measuring a particular characteristic. Face validity is often useful for ensuring the cooperation of people who are participating in a research study” (p. 92). Leedy and Ormrod noted that content validity is, “the extent to which a measurement instrument is a representative sample of the content area being measured” (p. 92). For this study, face and content validity were first achieved through a detailed review of the literature and further through the use of a panel of experts to establish that the interview questions would yield data that inform the research questions.

***Panel of experts.*** In order to enhance this study’s validity, a panel of experts consisting of three university faculty members was asked to analyze the interview questions. Each of the panelists has a doctoral degree and is familiar with qualitative research methods. A letter was sent to each panelist acknowledging his or her participation and informing him or her of the purpose of the study. The panelists were supplied an evaluation form in order to review and evaluate the interview questions. A copy of the expert panel review form can be found in Appendix C. Each participant was asked to indicate whether the interview question was: (a) relevant to the research

question, (b) not relevant to the research question, or (b) should be modified. The responses of the expert panel were then synthesized by the researcher in order to enhance and strengthen the validity of the study.

**Reliability.** Kirk and Miller (1986) defined reliability as “the extent to which the same observational procedure in the same context yields the same information” (p. 80). LeCompte and Goetz (1982) proposed, internal reliability refers to the level that other researchers will take a set of existing constructs and match them with data in a similar way as the original researcher. Franklin and Ballan (2001) stated, “External reliability addresses the issue of whether independent researchers would discover the same truth or generate the same constructs in the same or similar setting” (p. 275). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) stated that interrater reliability is “the extent to which two or more individuals evaluating the same product or performance give identical judgments” (p. 93).

***Interrater reliability.*** Patton (1987) noted, “Important insights can emerge from the different ways in which two people look at the same set of data” (p. 150). In order to establish interrater reliability in this qualitative study, the following steps were included in the process:

1. The primary researcher examined the transcripts using bracketing for reduction, horizontalization, and synthesis for textual description and conclusions.
2. The primary researcher met with the rater(s) and reviewed the coding process for identifying themes.
3. The primary researcher determined a transcript for the purpose of teaching the rater(s) the study’s coding process.

4. The process included the rater(s) being provided with a clean copy of the selected transcript while the researcher maintained the highlighted-analyzed version of the transcript.
5. The researcher and rater(s) each read a transcript three times prior to analyzing the content. The first reading was designed to familiarize the rater(s) and researchers with the data.
6. The purpose of the second reading was to allow the researcher and rater(s) an opportunity to become more comfortable with the information and to answer any questions about the transcript.
7. The third reading provided the researcher and rater(s) the opportunity to analyze the data by bracketing for reduction, horizontalization, and synthesis of the text for structural descriptions and conclusions.
8. The researcher assisted the rater(s) in completing the analysis of one selected transcript.
9. Meaning units were entered in the left margin and structural descriptions and conclusions were entered into the right margin. This completed the analysis of the transcript.
10. The additional rater(s) applied the same process to the remaining transcripts independent of the primary researcher.
11. After completion of the process for all transcripts, the primary researcher and rater(s) reconvened. The primary researcher and the rater(s) then reviewed their identified conclusions.



12. An analysis form was used to identify the agreed-upon themes and help to discover any discrepancies that arose.
13. The primary researcher and rater(s) discussed the differences and came to a consensus on the conclusions. A categorizing form was created to identify overall themes.
14. For this purposes of this study, criteria for themes were met when a minimum of 60% of participants provide supportive data. The contributions from the additional rater(s) increased reliability, reduced bias, and offered another perspective in identifying themes (Denzin, 1989; Husserl & Gibson, 1962; Moustakas, 1994).

### **Role of the Researcher**

Patton (2002) noted the “credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork—as well as things going on in a person’s life that might prove a distraction” (p. 14). A quality research study requires the investigator to be neutral in regard to the topic being studied. A researcher cannot set out to prove a particular perspective or influence the data to come to predetermined or desired truths (Patton, 1990). Patton stated, “The investigator’s commitment is to understand the world as it is, to be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and to be balanced in reporting both confirming and disconfirming evidence” (p. 55).

**Reflexivity.** Goodall (2000) suggested that reflexivity is “the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal deep connections between the writer and his or her subject” (p. 137). Leedy and Ormrod

(2005) proposed that qualitative researchers should engage in reflexivity as their “data collection has inevitably been influenced by their own assumptions and values, they openly acknowledge their biases and speculate on how these may have affected what they did, what data they collected, and how they interpreted their results” (p. 285). Prasad (2005) proposed reflexivity is useful to overcome three types of researcher biases: social bias, field bias, and intellectual bias. Prasad describes these three biases as follows:

(a) Social bias arises from a researcher’s identity locations, as pertaining to age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, occupation, membership in the Western hemisphere or the Third World, and so on, and influences a researcher’s interpretation of any social situation; (b) field bias stems from the researcher’s position in her or his academic field, whether he or she is a novice researcher or an experienced scholar, and determines the choice of a research focus, degree of investment, and so on; and (c) intellectual bias is driven by the demands of the profession and the researcher’s desire to be recognized as a leading scholar, a prominent intellectual, or an expert social scientist. (p. 197)

**Statement of personal bias.** The researcher has almost a decade of experience as a manager and leader in the university setting. The researcher made every effort to mitigate any biases by using reflexivity. For instance the researcher: (a) engaged an expert panel to evaluate the interview questions; (b) involved a second rater in the data analysis activities; and (c) conducted a thorough review of the scholarly literature associated with research topic. It is the role of the researcher to report the responses of the study’s participants and synthesize the common thematic elements, which will surface without any personal agenda or bias.

## Data Analysis

Hatch (2002) noted, “Qualitative data analysis involves a deductive dimension. As patterns or relationships are discovered in the data, hypothetical categories are formed, and the data are then read deductively to determine if these categories are supported by the overall data set” (p. 10). Holloway (1997) proposed a nine-step process to data analysis:

1. Ordering and organizing the collected material
2. Rereading the data
3. Breaking the material into manageable sections
4. Identifying and highlighting meaningful phrases
5. Building, comparing, and contrasting categories
6. Looking for consistent patterns of meanings
7. Searching for relationships and grouping categories together
8. Recognizing and describing patterns, themes, and typologies
9. Interpreting and searching for meaning (p. 44)

Participant responses to the interview questions through the use of the DNA aided the researcher in gathering the data for transcription. The DNA helped to maintain the quality of the data collected. Content analysis is the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data (Patton, 1990). The researcher implemented coding as a strategy to categorize the themes found in the participants’ responses.

Maxwell (2005) stated that a goal of coding in qualitative research is to rearrange the data “into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (p. 96). The participant responses and the

data were collapsed into common thematic elements. Repetition of statements, thoughts, or concepts was vital to determining the necessary categories, as this demonstrated commonalities found in participants' replies to interview questions. Thematic categories were ranked by frequency and prioritized. Each category was described and textually based on participant responses. A narrative was utilized to describe each major theme uncovered in this study. A second rater was used to code the data in order to enhance the reliability.

### **Data Display**

Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that data display "is an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action" (p. 11). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) suggested that data displays for studies utilizing content analysis should include the following:

1. A description of the body of material you studied.
2. Precise definitions and descriptions of the characteristics you looked for.
3. The coding or rating procedure.
4. Tabulations for each characteristic.
5. A description of patterns that the data reflect. (p. 143)

Data were displayed using a variety of methods including narrative and tables, which will help to describe the themes expressed by the participants. The data display supported the key findings brought forth by the participants' responses to the interview questions, through the DNA research method.

**Summary**

This chapter addressed the nature and design of the study utilizing qualitative research methods and in particular narrative research. The DNA was described and the purpose of the study and the research questions were identified. Sections of this chapter also explained the sources of data, the participant selection, and how the study would protect its human subjects with regard respecting each person, beneficence, and justice. Chapter 3 also contained a detailed description of the data collection strategy, validity, reliability, and the role of the researcher. The chapter concluded with a section depicting the techniques used to analyze and display the data related to the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige.

## Chapter 4: Analysis of Findings

The purpose of this study is to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. This chapter presents the results of the data collection and analysis component of the project. Storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige were obtained through interviews conducted with university administrators, including presidents, provosts, vice presidents of academic affairs, and academic deans. The participant responses and the data were collapsed into common thematic elements with the use of content analysis.

### Organization of the Chapter

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the study, including a restatement of the purpose and research questions, and a profile of the participating university leaders. These are followed by a depiction of the techniques utilized for data collection, data analysis, and also the methods used to ensure validity and maintain reliability. The data collected and analyzed are then presented in the data display section according to the research questions and connected interview questions. This chapter concludes with a brief summary.

### Overview

**The purpose of the study.** The purpose of this study is to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. A review of the literature supported the need to explore the use of storytelling as a strategy for leading change in universities seeking to increase institutional prestige. University leaders provided the insight and perspective necessary to study the storytelling strategies used to implement prestige-enhancing change within institutions of higher education.

**Research questions.** The following research questions were explored in this study:

1. How is storytelling defined by higher education leaders?
2. What are the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige?
3. How are framing, sensemaking, and restorying evidenced?

**Participant profile.** The 11 participants who met the criteria of serving as a university president, provost-vice president, or academic dean were interviewed for this study using the DNA. Code letters were assigned to each participant in order to maintain participant confidentiality. All data collected during the interview process were locked in a secured file cabinet. All documentation obtained during the course of data collection will be maintained for 5 years and then destroyed according to the guidelines regarding the protection of human participants.

All participants had been in their current positions for at least 1 year prior to the completion of the interview instrument. Each of the 11 participants work in administrative roles at regionally accredited not-for-profit universities located within the United States. Five of the respondents work as university presidents. Three participants work as university provosts or vice presidents, and three others work as academic deans. Seven of the participants were employed in private universities, and four participants represented public institutions of higher education at the time of the interview. Three of the participants were female, and the remaining eight were male. Five of the 11 respondents represent universities accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Four participants represent institutions accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Two respondents' universities are accredited by the

Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Table 3 illustrates the demographic breakdown of the participants in this study.

Table 3

*Participant Professional Demographic Information*

Participant	Male	Female	Southern Association	North Central Association	Western Association	Public University	Private-NonProfit	President	Provost-Vice President	Academic Dean
A	X		X				X			X
B	X			X			X	X		
C		X	X				X			X
D	X		X			X			X	
E		X		X		X		X		
F	X				X		X	X		
G	X				X	X		X		
H	X			X			X	X		
I	X		X				X		X	
J	X			X			X		X	
K		X	X			X				X

*Participant A.* Participant A holds the position of academic dean at the college level of a private university in Texas with an enrollment around 4,700. The university represented is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.



*Participant B.* Participant B serves as the president of a private university in Oklahoma with an enrollment of approximately 2,100. The university is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

*Participant C.* Participant C is currently an academic dean at the college level of a private university in Texas with an enrollment of around 2,000. The private university is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

*Participant D.* Participant D is the provost for a public university in Texas with an enrollment of approximately 7,800. The state university is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

*Participant E.* Participant E is the president of a public university in Oklahoma with an estimated enrollment of 2,100 students. The state university is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

*Participant F.* Participant F is the president of a private university in California with an approximate enrollment of 7,700 students. The university is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

*Participant G.* Participant G is the president of a public university in California with an enrollment of approximately 3,800 students. The state university is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

*Participant H.* Participant H is the president of a private university in Arkansas with an estimated enrollment of 6,810 students. The private university is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

*Participant I.* Participant I is the vice president for academic affairs at a private university in Alabama with approximately 1,700 students. The university is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

*Participant J.* Participant J is the vice president for academic affairs at a private university in West Virginia with an approximate enrollment of 500 students. The university is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

*Participant K.* Participant K is an academic dean at the college level in a public university in Texas with an approximate enrollment of 31,000 students. The public university is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

### **Data Collection**

Criteria, purposeful, and snowball sampling were utilized to select the participants for this study. The criteria for participants to meet for this study included the following: (a) at least 1 year of experience as a senior leader at a university, (b) current employment in a leadership position at a regionally accredited institution, and (c) current leadership position at a not-for-profit institution located within the United States of America. Higher education leaders who met the criteria were purposefully asked to participate in this study. Participants who agreed to be included in this study were also solicited to provide names of other leaders in higher education who would meet the criteria and might be willing to participate.

Through these sampling strategies, 11 university leaders with the rank of president, provost-vice president, or academic dean who met the defined criteria were identified and asked to participate in this study. Data were collected from the participants

using an interview instrument consisting of four questions. An expert panel of three education professionals, all possessing doctoral degrees, validated the four questions. Each panelist is competent and knowledgeable in the area of qualitative research and inquiry. Participants were asked to complete the interview using a password-protected Wiki, which provided a secured avenue for responses. Each participant was assigned a code in order to maintain confidentiality. The secured Wiki provided participants an opportunity to view responses from other participants while maintaining confidentiality. The participants were able to view and edit their responses for a period of 7 days following the completion of the interview. The researcher's e-mail address and phone number were provided to each participant in the event he or she needed clarification to any question. Data were composed of the responses collected from the interview, which informed the study by providing a textual narrative.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using Holloway's (1997) analysis process as a guide. The following steps were used: (a) ordering and organizing the collected material; (b) rereading the data; (c) breaking the material into manageable sections; (d) identifying and highlighting meaningful phrases; (e) building, comparing, and contrasting categories; (f) looking for consistent patterns of meanings; (g) searching for relationships and grouping categories together; (h) recognizing and describing patterns, themes, and typologies; and (i) interpreting and searching for meaning.

The researcher reviewed the interview transcript and removed any irrelevant information found to be out of line with the stated objective of determining storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. Data analyses were conducted in

order to group the data into major themes. Upon the completion of the primary researcher's work to group thematically together the data collected, a second rater worked independently to analyze the same data transcript and identify relevant themes. This was done to ensure the reliability and validity of the data analysis. The primary researcher and the second rater then met and reviewed the transcripts together, with great attention paid to the meaning of the discovered themes in relation to the context of each interview question. The primary researcher and the second rater had little to no disagreements in determining the relevant themes associated with the analysis of the data. The primary researcher and the second rater worked together to determine a consistent set of themes and prepared a coding chart to help demonstrate the results. Findings present in more than 55% of participant responses were determined to be the major themes. The results of the data collection and analysis, along with the key thematic components, are presented in this chapter.

### **Data Display**

Participant information was deidentified in order to provide confidentiality as part of their involvement in the interview process. Each of the 11 participants was assigned and referred to by a letter, A through K. The identifying participant letter accompanies the results depicted in both the narrative components and the visual illustrations presented throughout this chapter. The data are displayed by stating the research question, followed by the corresponding interview question. Specific examples of participant responses are presented to demonstrate the identified themes. Data are presented in the same sequential order of the interview instrument.

## Results

**Research question 1.** Research question 1 asked: How is story telling defined by higher education leaders? The corresponding interview question relating to research question 1 was: How would you describe the key elements of storytelling? The three main themes that emerged from this interview question included the concepts of sensemaking, framing, and restorying. Table 4 displays participant responses that illustrate the three prominent themes.

Table 4

*Number of Participant Responses That Identify the Three Prominent Themes Found in Research Question 1*

Themes	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	PF	PG	PH	PI	PJ	PK
Sensemaking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Framing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Restorying	X		X	X					X	X	X

***Sensemaking.*** This theme emerged in all 11 participant responses (100%).

Descriptors such as relevant, emotionally and intellectually connective, provides understanding, and informative were used to describe the theme of sensemaking. The following excerpts from participant responses serve to demonstrate this theme:

As such, these stories become a part of the schema of the individual and frame how he-she understands and interprets life and context. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

There are many such elements and the extent of their presence may determine their effectiveness in communicating. Among those are...connectivity-

relevance to the particular audience, delivery style, humor, and relevance to the point being made. (Participant B, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

It is a narrative that conveys meaning from one to another...the point of storytelling is to convey a message via a story, a medium that allows for greater richness in the understanding of the recipient. (Participant D, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

To be effective, I believe that a story must be pertinent to the audience....Genuine emotional connection is necessary. (Participant G, personal communication, April 29, 2011)

I think storytelling is basically about telling stories that come from the heart which have a point to them so that it will move the audience in such a way that they will remember the points being made. I think it has to be personal and from the heart for it to be really effective. (Participant H, personal communication, April 26, 2011)

Storytelling usually has the advantage of speaking to the heart as much as the head. It reaches out to listeners in ways that cold, hard facts simply cannot. It finds relevance and recognition in the process of relating events, thoughts, and ideas. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

***Framing.*** This theme emerged in 10 of the 11 responses (91%). Descriptors such as well-crafted, purposeful, authentic, conversation between storyteller and listener, and personal were used to describe the theme of framing. The following excerpts from participant responses are related to this theme:

To me, the key elements of storytelling are the purpose of the story (motivational, informational, normative lesson, building culture), the main message, and the variety of delivery methods and media to be chosen. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

The key elements of storytelling include an invitation to listen or read—that is, something that interests the audience members that makes them want to stick with it. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

I believe that the elements of storytelling include the storyteller and the listener and each of their points of view, the purpose of the story being delivered, the delivery method and any props that might be used to deliver the message. (Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

I use storytelling to help continually paint a picture of what our university can become. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

Using stories should have a purpose and a point. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

***Restorying.*** This theme emerged in 6 of 11 participant responses (55%).

Descriptors such as applicable, memorable, replicable, and worth remembering describe the restorying theme. The following participant responses describe this theme:

Additionally, stories are easily replicated and retold like songs, which are easily repeated once learned. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

Another key element is what I like to call the geode—something to take away from the story. It may be a moral or a truth, but there must be a point to the story. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

My ability to get everyone to see the same definition of green is to give different verbal narratives until I have painted a complete mental picture of what they need to see. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

It finds relevance and recognition in the process of relating events, thoughts, and ideas, so that listeners can see themselves, make applications to their own lives, or least think a little more deeply about some common experience. A really good story makes us better just for having heard it. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

It is also very helpful if the story is interesting as that engages the listener and makes the story more memorable. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

**Research question 2.** The second research question asked: What are the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige? The corresponding interview question related to research question 2 was: How do you use storytelling to increase prestige at your institution? Concepts mentioned by more than 55% of participants were declared to be major themes. The themes were classified as strategies and grouped together under the labels of applicable, connective, constituent pride, truthful, using facts, and university mission. Table 5 displays participant responses to the seven themes established by the interview question.



Table 5

*Number of Participant Responses That Identify the Prominent Themes Found in Research Question 2*

Themes	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	PF	PG	PH	PI	PJ	PK
Applicable	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Connective	X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X
Constituent Pride	X	X	X		X		X			X	X
Truthful	X		X		X	X		X		X	X
Using Facts	X	X	X	X			X				X
University Mission	X		X				X	X	X		X

***Applicable.*** This theme was present in 9 of 11 participant responses (82%).

Participants suggested that stories used to increase prestige should be easily applicable to those listening. Key descriptive phrases used to develop this theme included student and faculty successes, lives changed or transformed, and employer satisfaction. The following are participant responses related to the theme of applicable:

We tell stories about our faculty and how they have achieved significance in their fields and about how they go the extra mile to add value to student's lives.

(Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

To reach most audiences and to have them remember the positive emotion and connect it to my institution usually requires the use of a story about students, faculty, or alumni—stories that show them making a positive difference in the

lives of others, or a dramatic change or accomplishment in their own lives.

(Participant B, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

One video campaign shows successful students in their workplaces who tell their stories of how the people at (University) helped mold and shape them into the people of influence they are. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

We try to use students whenever possible in our viewbooks, in public speaking, in alumni receptions, or any other event because they can tell the story of how they are impacted or transformed while being a student at our institution better than we can. (Participant H, personal communication, April 26, 2011)

Sometimes the stories are negative, the consequences of poor choices. Sometimes the stories are boasting, telling of our student and alumni accomplishments. But most likely the stories are positive and uplifting—often touching. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

***Connective.*** Connective emerged as a theme in 8 of 11 participant responses (73%). Participants suggested that emotional or intellectual connectivity was a major strategy used in their storytelling. Key descriptors used to describe this theme include emotional connection, heart, compelling, and meaningful. The following excerpts from participant responses help to demonstrate the theme of connective:

We tell lots of stories and attempt to capture that which is real, relevant, and meaningful for our constituents. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

To reach most audiences and to have them remember the positive emotion and connect it to my institution usually requires the use of a story about students, faculty, or alumni. (Participant B, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

Most of our university storytelling deals with current students and alums talking about what the university has meant to them. (Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

We all relate to the world around us, although we often don't immediately identify a message with the experience. As a storyteller I try to connect the experience with the message. (Participant F, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

I use stories to clarify matters on campus and to enlist the community to support the University. Tales of student success are wonderful connections for the community to have and to relish. (Participant G, personal communication, April 29, 2011)

***Constituent pride.*** Stories told to instill pride and respect in a university's constituency were mentioned by 7 of 11 participants (64%). Key descriptors used to depict this thematic concept included stories for the public, community, constituents, pride, qualifications, and influence. The following excerpts present demonstrations of participant responses in regard to storytelling in increase constituent pride:

We tell lots of stories and attempt to capture that which is real, relevant, and meaningful for our constituents. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

We want our constituency and our potential constituency to see that our institution is a place where people begin a new story in their lives. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

One of our most successful campaigns has been “Ride with Pride,” which focused on (University) made all the difference to me. Prestige is not really the word that I would use; it’s more about cultivating pride in the university in our constituents. (Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

I use stories to clarify matters on campus and to enlist the community to support the University. (Participant G, personal communication, April 29, 2011)

We believe that by systematically and intentionally telling our story—to ourselves first and then to our other constituencies—, we will encourage others to come and join in our efforts. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

Telling stories is a personal interaction that puts a face on a large and seemingly intimidating educational institution. It is easy to forget that the university is people—one at a time making a difference. Telling stories helps alumni remember and be proud. Potential donors become engaged and become concerned supporters. Also, those telling the stories are reminded of the really good things that happen and their impact on those around them. These sorts of activities are the lifeblood that keeps a large institution real and leads to the accrual of friends and supporters. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

***Truthful.*** An additional major theme found in the data described the participants' use of truthful accounts in their storytelling as a strategy. Telling truthful stories was listed by 7 of 11 participants in this study (64%). Key descriptors found within the data to demonstrate this theme include real, authentic, and personal. The following excerpts from the data represent the truthful theme of storytelling as a strategy:

We tell stories of success about students, faculty, employers, alumni, etc. We tell stories of achievement in the midst of difficult obstacles. We tell stories about how student's lives were changed by our programs. We tell stories about employers and what they say about our students. We tell stories about the "good" that our students are doing in the name of Jesus Christ across the globe.

(Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

We have students and faculty-staff telling their stories. One of the best documents we have produced is a booklet called "Ties That Bind." This booklet tells a brief story about a series of successful students and the faculty members who made a difference in their lives. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

I actually try to have real experiences so I can tell the story and make it both real and mine. (Participant F, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

Much of our effort over the time I've been here has been to improve that part of what we do. We have stories to tell that relate to the qualifications and achievements of our faculty and staff, and we have begun formally collecting what we call "Student Success Stories," frequently by having former students simply tell the story of their lives since graduation. These and similar efforts

collectively have the effect of telling a cohesive story of the institution as a whole: who we are, what we believe, what we do, and where we do it. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

Almost always the stories are about people. These people may be faculty or students, but sometimes they are others that are influenced and impacted by our faculty and students. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

**Using facts.** Another theme emerging from the data was the use of facts in storytelling as strategy. Using facts was mentioned by 6 of 11 participants (55%).

Descriptors employed to determine the use of facts theme included statistics, rankings, and factual. Statements relating to this theme included the following:

We tell factual stories about the success of our alums. Issues of integrity and fact must be at the base of all the stories. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

I can cite lots and lots of statistics and descriptive information that will impress the policy wonks, but to reach most audiences and to have them remember the positive emotion and connect it to my institution usually requires the use of a story about students, faculty, or alumni. (Participant B, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

It's important for faculty and staff to realize that how other universities view a school figures into the national rankings from various sources. We need to be more aware of getting our stories out to our own community, our region, and other universities in other parts of the country. While we might not like ranking

systems, they are important to attracting and keeping good students and attracting and keeping donors. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

We can have a tremendous statistic but it does not carry the weight of a good story. So, we may have fabulous pass rates on the CPA exam or nursing or teacher ed or whatever, but that message is not as compelling as hearing the story of a single mother who struggled and succeeded. (Participant D, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

Depending on the circumstances, I might include statistics (size of the college, number of programs, etc.), but that information is more for orientation and introduction purposes. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

***University mission.*** A final major theme found within the data involves the use of storytelling as a strategy to remind listeners' of a university's established mission. This theme was found in 6 of 11 responses (55%). Descriptors used to develop this theme included university mission and purpose, important, focus, dreams, and goals. Participant statements related to this theme include:

One video campaign shows successful students in their workplaces who tell their stories of how the people at (university) helped mold and shape them into the people of influence they are. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

Storytelling in this sense is a very important part in getting the message out relative to our institution that equates to prestige in terms of what is really important to us. (Participant H, personal communication, April 26, 2011)

We talk about the kind of successes at this institution as well as others that share the focus of our mission. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

Outreach and engagement is an important part of our college mission, so we often have successes in that area. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

I prefer stories that will help our students and graduates achieve their dreams and goals....Our true “prestige” is the quality of our graduates. (Participant G, personal communication, April 29, 2011)

**Research question 3.** The third research question asked: How are framing, sensemaking, and restorying evidenced? The corresponding interview question to research question 3 was: Please tell me a story about increasing university prestige. The two themes emerging from this question’s responses related to the concept of framing were introduction and excellence. The two themes associated with the concept of sensemaking were authentic and understanding. The final two themes in this question are connected to the concept of restorying and are labeled memorable and replicable. Table 6 illustrates the themes found in the participants’ responses to this interview question.

Table 6

*Number of Participant Responses That Identify the Prominent Themes Found in Research Question 3*

Concept	Theme	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	PF	PG	PH	PI	PJ	PK
Framing	Excellence	X		X	X			X		X	X	X
	Introduction			X		X	X		X	X	X	

(continued)



Concept	Theme	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	PF	PG	PH	PI	PJ	PK
Sensemaking	Understanding	X		X	X					X	X	X
	Authentic	X	X		X		X	X	X			
Restorying	Memorable	X		X	X		X		X			X
	Replicable			X		X	X	X	X			X

***Framing and excellence.*** Seven of 11 participants (64%) described the component of framing by telling stories related to the theme of excellence. Key descriptors for this theme included ranking, high-level, prestigious, and award. The following excerpts exemplify participant responses in this theme:

We are also constantly telling our story about being ranked as the number one “up and coming” university to watch by *U.S. News*. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

I like to show pictures and other documents, like conference proceedings, so that the board members can see how our students are competing at a high level with prestigious universities from around the nation. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

We share these stories—life-changing stories for both our students and for the recipients of their service—in documents sent to many, many others [*U.S. News and World Report*] rankings...are used HEAVILY in this country and 25% of their rating is the reputation granted by other university presidents, provosts, and admissions directors. (Participant D, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

[We are telling] the story of our institution receiving the national “presidential volunteer service award” for our students being involved in so many

facets of success serving others while receiving a quality education. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

When we tell her story to prospective students, and especially their parents, they are inspired by her example as well as impressed that we are a university whose students are people of quality who can compete at the highest level. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

***Framing and introduction.*** The use of story as a mode to introduce the university to a variety of constituencies was presented by 6 of 11 participants (55%). The descriptors most often associated with this theme included incoming students, prospective, orientation, and get to know us. The following statements are examples of how participants demonstrated this theme:

We need to be more aware of getting our stories out to our own community, our region, and other universities in other parts of the country. While we might not like ranking systems, they are important to attracting and keeping good students and attracting and keeping donors. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

This is a powerful story to use with incoming and current students. (Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

I have used that story to describe the ethic I want for all parents and new students as they get to know us. (Participant F, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

When we tell her story to prospective students, and especially their parents, they are inspired by her example as well as impressed that we are a

university whose students are people of quality who can compete at the highest level. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

I would then reflect to my audience the way in which [university] transformed my life and how I made the decision to stay not only a second, but a third and fourth year and graduate from this small college in the middle of Arkansas because of the prestige I felt I would receive in terms of what was really important in life. (Participant H, personal communication, April 26, 2011)

***Sensemaking and understanding.*** Six of 11 (55%) participants included comments supporting an effort to improve listeners' understanding of a university story, which aids in overall sensemaking. The descriptors employed to determine this theme included describe, example, good stories and storytellers, and reminders. The following excerpts exemplify the theme of sensemaking and understanding.

The stories themselves must be good. However, the storyteller must be exceptional! (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

In reports to the education committee of the Board of Trustees, instead of using facts and statistics, I've been telling stories of our students who are presenting at national conferences and faculty members who have been mentoring these students. I like to show pictures and other documents, like conference proceedings, so that the board members can see how our students are competing at a high level with prestigious universities from around the nation. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

We share these stories—life-changing stories for both our students and for the recipients of their service—in documents sent to many, many others.

(Participant D, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

The story of our institution receiving the national “presidential volunteer service award” for our students being involved in so many facets of success serving others while receiving a quality education and that these things can be accomplished by dedicated faculty AND funds to make this happen. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

When we tell her story to prospective students, and especially their parents, they are inspired by her example as well as impressed that we are a university whose students are people of quality who can compete at the highest level. When we tell her story to donors, they likewise are impressed that an institution that can attract and prepare students of this quality must be an institution worthy of their support. Just saying that we have internships at the national level does not carry the same power. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

***Sensemaking and authentic.*** Within the concept of sensemaking 6 of the 11 participants (55%) identified elements associated with the importance of authenticity in storytelling. Descriptors for this theme found in the data included genuine, without misleading, personal, truthful, and from the heart. Statements found in the data supporting this theme include the following:

We are currently telling the story and learning how to tell the story without being misleading....The stories must be genuine and not mis-leading. There is always a

temptation to “stretch” the story to make your programs look better. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

One recent story I have used often is about one of our alums who is blind and attended and graduated in the 1960’s before ADA, etc. She overcame tremendous obstacles and became very successful. She states that much of her success is due to her university and the nurturing and helpful environment she encountered. (Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

Once again, prestige is not the motivating factor. Rather, I prefer stories that will help our students and graduates achieve their dreams and goals, either through scholarship assistance, graduate school acceptance, job offerings, or promotion. I care more about what students look like when they leave here than the “prestige” of their records upon arrival. Our true “prestige” is the quality of our graduates. (Participant G, personal communication, April 29, 2011)

Having the ability to talk from the heart is essential. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

We recently had a student receive a prestigious funded internship at the national level, and we have been amazed by the power of her story. Her family came to this country from Central America, and she is taking seriously the task of getting a good education while pursuing her faith and her career goals. When we tell her story to prospective students, and especially their parents, they are inspired by her example as well as impressed that we are a university whose students are people of quality who can compete at the highest level. When we tell her story to donors, they likewise are impressed that an institution that can attract

and prepare students of this quality must be an institution worthy of their support. Just saying that we have internships at the national level does not carry the same power. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

***Restorying and memorable.*** The concept of restorying provides an umbrella for two themes associated with the data. The first theme involves the memorable elements of storytelling. Seven of 11 participants (64%) provided responses detailing this theme. The descriptors in the data connected to the restorying and memorable theme included memorable, unforgettable, amazing, impactful, and future. Participant statements related to this theme included the following:

Instead of using facts and statistics, I've been telling stories of our students who are presenting at national conferences and faculty members who have been mentoring these students. I like to show pictures and other documents, like conference proceedings, so that the board members can see how our students are competing at a high level with prestigious universities from around the nation. Some other reports they seem to forget, but I hear them telling other board members those stories. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

The students return from these experiences in Africa or Southeast Asia or wherever with amazing stories of service. (Participant D, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

I prefer the stories of common occurrences; chance moments of caring, of fears allayed and hearts won. Those are the stories that move my school forward. (Participant F, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

Students and faculty members both had a great impact as the story developed in terms of how my life was changed. (Participant H, personal communication, April 26, 2011)

Planting these seeds will make a difference in the future....Telling stories helps alumni remember and be proud. Potential donors become engaged and become concerned supporters. Also, those telling the stories are reminded of the really good things that happen and their impact on those around them. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

***Restorying and replicable.*** The second theme associate with the concept of restorying involves the value in replicating or retelling the story time after time and retelling of the story by its listeners. The theme of restorying and replicable was evidenced in 6 of 11 responses (55%). Key descriptors for this theme included others telling, retold, and used often. Excerpts from participant responses related to this theme include the following:

We want our constituency and our potential constituency to see that our institution is a place where people begin a new story in their lives....Some other reports they seem to forget, but I hear them telling other board members those stories.

(Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

One recent story I have used often is about one of our alums who is blind and attended and graduated in the 1960's before ADA, etc. She overcame tremendous obstacles and became very successful. She states that much of her success is due to her university and the nurturing and helpful environment she

encountered. This is a powerful story to use with incoming and current students. (Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

We won't rise in the rankings with most of the stories I tell, but we do rise where it matters most: in the estimation of those who pay our tuition and who (hopefully) will become our unofficial ambassadors. (Participant F, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

I have retold this story many times in business circles as one affirmation in support of our students and graduates. (Participant G, personal communication, April 29, 2011)

I often tell a story about how I came to [university] from New Mexico not intending to stay. I really only intended to come for one year and learn some spiritual truths during that time and then return to New Mexico where my friends were attending and go to a good university with a good academic reputation and prestige. I would then reflect to my audience the way in which [university] transformed my life and how I made the decision to stay not only a second, but a third and fourth year and graduate from this small college in the middle of Arkansas because of the prestige I felt I would receive in terms of what was really important in life. (Participant H, personal communication, April 26, 2011)

**Additional findings.** There are some findings that did not meet the criteria for a major theme. However, they were identified by enough participants to make them worth noting. The fourth item on the interview instrument asked the participants: Is there was anything else you would like to add in regard to the use of storytelling strategies for



leading change in university prestige? The following minor thematic findings identified in the data are presented below and are followed by corresponding participant statements.

***Public relations (including ranking).*** Five of the 11 (45%) participants mentioned the role of storytelling in public relations efforts related to national rankings and university reputation. The following statements demonstrate the responses involving the national ranking systems:

We just received notification from *U.S. News and World Report* last month that our Masters of Accountancy program was rated number 1 in the nation for placing graduates within 90 days of graduation against all other graduate business programs in the U.S.... We are also constantly telling our story about being ranked as the number one “up and coming” university to watch by *U.S. News*.

(Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

It’s important for faculty and staff to realize that how other universities view a school figures into the national rankings from various sources. We need to be more aware of getting our stories out to our own community, our region, and other universities in other parts of the country. While we might not like ranking systems, they are important to attracting and keeping good students and attracting and keeping donors. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

So, we keep our radar screens open all the time seeking good stories to tell the public. The deans convey messages to the provost who funnels information to the president and to marketing and communication for refinement and distribution.... Furthermore, we share these stories—life-changing stories for both our students and for the recipients of their service—in documents sent to many,

many others (*U.S. News and World Report* rankings are bogus, but the bottom line is that they are used HEAVILY in this country and 25% of their rating is the reputation granted by other university presidents, provosts, and admissions directors). (Participant D, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

Most of our university storytelling deals with current students and alums talking about what the university has meant to them. We use these in print and web-based media and at every opportunity to meet with prospective students. (Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

When I moved to my current position at a small, faith-based institution, one of the comments I kept encountering as I moved among the community is that our university was one of the “best-kept secrets” in our region. I concluded early on that, although the institution has much to recommend it, it had not done as good a job as it should have in “telling our story.” Consequently, much of our effort over the time I’ve been here has been to improve that part of what we do. We have stories to tell that relate to the qualifications and achievements of our faculty and staff, and we have begun formally collecting what we call “Student Success Stories,” frequently by having former students simply tell the story of their lives since graduation. These and similar efforts collectively have the effect of telling a cohesive story of the institution as a whole: who we are, what we believe, what we do, and where we do it. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

***Potency of storytelling.*** Four of the 11 (36%) participant responses to this question depicted the effectiveness and potency of storytelling in higher education leadership. Statements related to this included:

I wish I did it better and more effectively, as I know it would enhance the messages I am hoping to convey. (Participant B, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

I would just say that I find storytelling to be one of the most effective ways to get our message across to all constituents. Everyone likes a good story. (Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

I am convinced that there is no more potent method of communicating a message than by employing the Master's use of storytelling. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

These sorts of activities are the lifeblood that keeps a large institution real and leads to the accrual of friends and supporters. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

## **Summary**

Qualitative data were collected for this study through an interview consisting of four questions. Content analysis was conducted by the primary researcher and in conjunction with a second rater, as outlined by the data analysis guide developed by Holloway (1997). Findings evidenced in 6 of the 11 (55%) or more responses were determined to be major themes and were coded as such. This aids in demonstrating the reliability of this study. Themes found in each interview question were presented in tables and participant excerpts were displayed below each theme as examples.

Three major themes were produced by research question 1—How is storytelling defined by higher education leaders?— and its corresponding interview question—How would you describe the key elements of storytelling? The themes that emerged from the data were identified as framing, sensemaking, and restorying.

Several themes emerged from responses to research question 2—What are the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige?—and its related interview question—How do you use storytelling to increase prestige at your institution? The themes associated with storytelling strategies were found to be applicable, connective, constituent pride, truthful, using facts, and university mission.

Six themes were produced by research question 3—How are framing, sensemaking, and restorying evidenced?—and its corresponding interview question—Please tell me a story about increasing university prestige. Two themes were found for each of the three conceptual areas of framing, sensemaking, and restorying. The themes associated with framing were identified and labeled as introduction and excellence. The two themes related to sensemaking were coded as authentic and understanding. The two themes involved with restorying were branded as memorable and replicable.

Participants were asked in the fourth interview question: Is there anything else you would like to add in regard to the use of storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige? This question elicited two findings related to the study, although they did not meet the criteria to qualify as major themes. The two additional findings included: (a) a depiction of the role storytelling plays in public relations efforts, especially as they relate to the university ranking systems; and (b) the potency of storytelling.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study is to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. A thorough review of the literature associated with the topics of the American higher education system, university prestige, organizational change, storytelling and change, and organizational change in higher education provided the backdrop for this study. The literature review produced a framework for understanding higher education and the leadership of institutional change, especially as it relates to the use of storytelling as a strategy for leading change and the pursuit of university prestige.

### **Organization of the Chapter**

This chapter begins with a summary of the background, a restatement of the study's purpose and research questions, a review of the data collection methods, and a summary of the data analysis. The findings and conclusions of the research study are presented as they relate to the research questions. Excerpts from the collected data and the scholarly literature are used to support the findings and conclusions. Implications for the field, the university, and higher education leaders are addressed along with recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Background**

Universities of all types are in a constant competition with each other for students, faculty, staff, and financial support. University leaders often seek to enhance the image of their institutions by increasing the level of university prestige. Melguizo and Strober (2007) compared higher education institutions to for-profit firms by stating, "While economic theory analyzes for-profit firms as profit maximizers, the developing economic theory of higher education sees non-profit higher education institutions as prestige

maximizers” (p. 633). Institutions seeking to increase prestige have shown an inability to utilize anything but a rather basic set of strategies for change (Toma, 2009).

The literature review demonstrated the important role storytelling could play in leadership and in organizational change initiatives. McKinnon (2008) offered that with change, “leaders can leverage stories to engage employees in meaningful ways. Those stories that recognize employees cares and concerns, while acknowledging the past and building positive anticipation about the future, can become a continual self-guided change tool” (p. 18). The literature related to the use of storytelling for leading change in institutions of higher education is limited. However, many of the key elements of storytelling as a change strategy can be applied to all organizations, including universities. Neuhauser (1993) recognized the importance of communication in all organizations, stating, “Stories are the single most powerful form of human communication. This has been true all over the world for thousands of years and is still just as true today in our organizations, communities, and families” (p. 4). Kaye (1996) suggested storytelling could play in a significant role in organizations seeking to initiate change or pursue a new vision, by stating, “Stories can shape the culture of organizations. Through stories and myths, we can form images of the organization and judge whether it is healthy or ailing...myths support rituals, communicate values and help leaders envisage the future” (p. 63).

A major premise demonstrated throughout the literature and summarized by Weick (2001) suggested that storytelling helps to “register, summarize, and allow construction of scenarios that are too complex for logical summaries to preserve” (p. 341). Three themes appeared throughout the literature on storytelling as a strategy for

leading change and provided the conceptual framework for this study: framing, sensemaking, and restorying.

### **Study Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. The following questions were created to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige and were developed to align with the conceptual framework as discovered in the literature review. The three research questions examined in this study were:

1. How is storytelling defined by higher education leaders?
2. What are the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige?
3. How are framing, sensemaking, and restorying evidenced?

### **Overview of Methods**

**Data collection.** A qualitative approach to research design was selected to identify the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige, as expressed by leaders in higher education. Hatch (2002) suggested qualitative studies engage the “lived experiences of real people in real settings” (p. 6). Patton (2002) stated, “Qualitative methods permit inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail, context, and nuance; that data collection need not be constrained by predetermined analytical categories contributes to the potential breadth of qualitative inquiry” (p. 227).

Data collected for this study were in narrative form and necessitated an understanding of narrative inquiry and analysis. Polkinghorne (2007) proposed, “Narrative research is the study of stories” (p. 471). Webster and Mertova (2007) posited

that narrative inquiry “provides researcher with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories” (p. 3). Merriam (2009) noted, “Narrative analysis uses the stories people tell, analyzing them in various ways, to understand the meaning of the experiences as revealed in the story” (p. 23). According to Patton (2002), the “central idea of narrative analysis is that stories and narratives offer especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings” (p. 116).

The DNA was selected to gather the qualitative data. The DNA is a research technique used to connect the past and present in order to change the future. It is based on the assemblage of narrative and story through technology, and crosses the fundamentals of the ancient Renga storytelling traditions, and modern complexity and emergence theories (Hyatt, 2011). Although similar to other narrative approaches, DNA sets itself apart by employing the Internet to provide a medium for multiple participants to provide responses to researcher-proposed questions through an alternating pattern, with each response made visible to all participants.

Klenke (2008) proposed that benefits of conducting electronic interviews included the participants’ ability to review and edit their responses, cost effectiveness, participants’ ability to respond at a time most convenient for them, efficiency of time, and researcher’s are not require to transcribe verbal responses because participants’ have already written out responses. The literature also suggests that written replies to interview questions allow for more insightful and helpful responses (J. Handy & Ross, 2005; Klenke, 2008) while also providing, as Klenke (2008) stated, participants an avenue to “revise and reflect on their responses” (p 135).



Participants for the interviews were selected by purposeful, snowball, and criterion sampling. The participant group consisted of higher education leaders with the rank of president, provost-vice president, or academic dean. The criteria established for the selection of participants consisted of the following: (a) at least 1 year of experience as a senior leader at a university, (b) current employment in a leadership position at a regionally accredited institution, and (c) current leadership position at a not for profit institution located within the United States of America. The participant sample consisted of 11 higher education leaders. Five university presidents, three provosts-vice presidents, and three academic deans voluntarily participated in the study. Seven of the 11 participants were from private- nonprofit universities, while four respondents were employed by public institutions. Three of the participants were female, and eight were male. Five of the 11 respondents represent universities accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Four participants represent institutions accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Two respondents' universities are accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

Upon approval granted by the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix E), interviews were conducted using the DNA and a password protected Wiki, which provided a secured area for responses. Interview questions were developed to correspond with the research questions associated with the study. A three-member panel of experts validated the interview questions. The panel's comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final interview questions, as deemed appropriate by the researcher and the researcher's advisor. Each participant was assigned a code in order to maintain confidentiality and the use of the secured Wiki allowed each participant to view

each other's responses while maintaining anonymity. Data were elicited from the interview questions in the form of a textual narrative.

**Data analysis.** The data garnered through the 11 interviews were evaluated and analyzed using Holloway's (1997) process and included the following steps: (a) ordering and organizing the collected material; (b) rereading the data; (c) breaking the material into manageable sections; (d) identifying and highlighting meaningful phrases; (e) building, comparing, and contrasting categories; (f) looking for consistent patterns of meanings; (g) searching for relationships and grouping categories together; (h) recognizing and describing patterns, themes, and typologies; and (i) interpreting and searching for meaning.

The researcher organized the collected data and read through the participant responses to the interview questions several times to help provide context. The data were organized into manageable sections and looked for identifiable, consistent, and repetitive themes, meanings, and patterns. This information was then placed into categories related to the stated objective of the study to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. The organized data were then studied to determine major themes related to the research questions. Findings presented in 55% or more of participant responses to each specific interview question were determined to be major themes.

A second rater was enlisted to enhance the reliability of the study. Patton (1990) suggested, "Important insights can emerge from the different ways in which two people look at the same set of data" (p. 383). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) proposed that interrater reliability is "the extent to which two or more individuals evaluating the same product or performance give identical judgments" (p. 93). The second rater worked independently to

analyze the data transcript and was asked to identify the major themes presented by the higher education leaders through their responses. The researcher and the second rater then met and reviewed the transcript together and came to a consensus regarding the major themes emerging from the data. Concepts appearing in more than 55% of participant responses to the respective interview questions were summarized as major themes and displayed in both narrative and table form.

### **Research Findings**

This section details the findings deemed to be major themes discovered through the data analysis process as they relate to each of the research questions. The themes are supported with key excerpts from a sampling of participant responses and with quotations from selected authors found in the literature review. Major themes for each research question are presented in order of frequency as found in participant responses.

**Research question 1 findings.** Research question 1 asked: How is storytelling defined by higher education leaders? The findings in this study corresponding to this research question identified three major themes: sensemaking, framing, and restorying.

**Sensemaking.** All 11 (100%) participating higher education leaders identified sensemaking as a major theme in defining storytelling. Sutherland and Dawson (2002) defined sensemaking as “a set of ideas emanating from the fields of psychology and organization studies that seeks to reveal how individuals construct meaning, interpret their world, and function within it” (p. 52). Words such as relevant, emotionally and intellectually connective, provides understanding, and informative were used to describe the theme of sensemaking. The following are examples of participant responses regarding this theme:

As such, these stories become a part of the schema of the individual and frame how he-she understands and interprets life and context. (Participant A, personal communication, May 6, 2011)

It is a narrative that conveys meaning from one to another...the point of storytelling is to convey a message via a story, a medium that allows for greater richness in the understanding of the recipient. (Participant D, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

Storytelling usually has the advantage of speaking to the heart as much as the head. It reaches out to listeners in ways that cold, hard facts simply cannot. It finds relevance and recognition in the process of relating events, thoughts, and ideas. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

Participant responses involving the thematic concept of sensemaking are also supported by the literature. Mai and Akerson (2003) discussed how stories help people within organizations comprehend change by letting them know the direction the organization is going, why the change is essential, the specific plan for implementation, and notifying them of the significance found in its achievement. Boje (1991) noted that individuals in organizations tell stories to help each other make sense of the realities found within their organizational surroundings. Simmons (2006) proposed that stories help individuals make sense of the chaotic circumstances often connected with change in organizations.

***Framing.*** Of the 11 research participants, 10 (91%) identified concepts related to the theme of framing in describing key elements of storytelling. Kaye (1996) suggested stories can help to frame an organization's current situation and may help its leaders to

envision a new future for the organization. Words such as well-crafted, purposeful, authentic, conversation between storyteller and listener, and personal were used to describe the theme of framing. Excerpts from participant responses related to this theme included the following:

To me, the key elements of storytelling are the purpose of the story (motivational, informational, normative lesson, building culture), the main message, and the variety of delivery methods and media to be chosen. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

The key elements of storytelling include an invitation to listen or read—that is, something that interests the audience members that makes them want to stick with it. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

I use storytelling to help continually paint a picture of what our university can become. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

A review of the literature produced several examples of framing as a key component of defining storytelling. According to McKinnon (2006), stories assist members of an organization in gaining a better understanding of where the organization truly is, what it must do to transform, and to verify what will remain the same. Bakhtin and Holquist (1981) suggested that dialogue as a communication tool helps prepare an organization to find a foundation where change can take place.

***Restorying.*** Six of 11 (55%) research participants mentioned concepts and ideas aligned with the theme of restorying. Treleaven (2001) noted that stories help people to see a new way in which they can act and live within their environments. Words used to describe this theme included applicable, memorable, replicable, and worth remembering

serve to describe the theme of restorying. Examples of participant responses identifying this theme included the following excerpts:

Additionally, stories are easily replicated and retold like songs, which are easily repeated once learned. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

It finds relevance and recognition in the process of relating events, thoughts, and ideas, so that listeners can see themselves, make applications to their own lives, or least think a little more deeply about some common experience. A really good story makes us better just for having heard it. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

It is also very helpful if the story is interesting as that engages the listener and makes the story more memorable. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

Selections from the literature review on storytelling as a change strategy help to exemplify further the theme of restorying. Lessem (1998) proposed that restorying and change within an organization requires a commitment to the transformation of the organization's story. McKinnon (2006) stated that stories can help people within organizations to see new perspectives and opportunities resulting from the change, which helps to legitimize the transformation.

**Research question 1 summary.** Three major themes emerged from the responses to research question 1: sensemaking, framing, and restorying. These major themes were also found within the literature review of this study. Each higher education leader interviewed for this study used descriptors associated with the theme of sensemaking to help define storytelling. Stories were shown to assist leaders in getting members of the

organization a better sense of understanding and connectivity to the change initiative. Weick (2001) proposed, “Sensemaking is about coherence of a situation, how events hang together, certainty that is sufficient for present purposes, and credibility” (p. 462). Weick also suggested the goal of making sense is to determine “what’s the story here” (p. 462) or “what’s a story here” (p. 462). The data also demonstrated the theme of framing as a component in helping to define storytelling. Participants suggested stories assist greatly in laying out a framework for the current realities of an organization, the need for change, and a vision of a new future for the university. Boje (1991) supported the theme of framing by proposing that members of organizations often use stories to reveal where change is needed and also to assist in preparing for the oncoming changes. Research participants also identified concepts associated with the theme of restorying. Participants noted the benefit of stories in helping members of the organization apply and share the key elements associated with a change program. According to Denning (2007), stories about the change can bring a new story into people’s minds that might instigate action. The major themes found in research question 1 are illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7

*Major Themes of Storytelling*

Sensemaking	
Framing	Restorying

**Research question 2 findings.** Research question 2 asked: What are the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige? From the analysis of participant responses, several major themes emerged as storytelling strategies. These

themes were identified in more than 55% of participant responses and were labeled as applicable, connective, constituent pride, truthful, using facts, and university mission.

*Applicable.* This theme was exemplified in 9 of 11 participant responses (82%). Respondents noted that stories used in universities should be easily applicable to those listening. Key words and phrases used to support this theme included student and faculty successes, lives changed or transformed, and employer satisfaction. The following are participant responses related to the theme of applicable:

We tell stories about our faculty and how they have achieved significance in their fields and about how they go the extra mile to add value to student's lives.

(Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

To reach most audiences and to have them remember the positive emotion and connect it to my institution usually requires the use of a story about students, faculty, or alumni—stories that show them making a positive difference in the lives of others, or a dramatic change or accomplishment in their own lives.

(Participant B, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

Sometimes the stories are negative, the consequences of poor choices. Sometimes the stories are boasting, telling of our student and alumni accomplishments. But most likely the stories are positive and uplifting—often touching. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

The literature related to the concepts of storytelling and organizations discuss the rationale for stories to be applicable in a variety of ways. Gabriel (2000) noted the following as a depiction of the need for stories to be applicable within organizations:



Stories are narratives with plots and character, generating emotion in narrator and audience, through a poetic elaboration of symbolic material. This material may be a product of fantasy or experience, including an experience of earlier narratives. Story plots entail conflicts, predicaments, trials, coincidences, and crises that call for choices, decisions, actions, and interactions, whose actual outcomes are often at odds with the characters' intentions and purposes. (p. 239)

**Connective.** Eight of 11 (73%) research participants identified connective as a theme and storytelling strategy. Participants proposed that connecting with an audience emotionally or intellectually was a major strategy used in their storytelling. Words utilized in describing this theme included emotional connection, heart, compelling, and meaningful. Excerpts from the following participant responses help to express the theme of connective:

We tell lots of stories and attempt to capture that which is real, relevant, and meaningful for our constituents. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

To reach most audiences and to have them remember the positive emotion and connect it to my institution usually requires the use of a story about students, faculty, or alumni. (Participant B, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

We all relate to the world around us, although we often don't immediately identify a message with the experience. As a storyteller I try to connect the experience with the message. (Participant F, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

According to Simmons (2006), “Before you can influence you must establish some connection. Story builds connections between you and those you wish to influence. Broader and stronger connections enable broader and stronger communications to flow between you” (p. 116). Gargiulo (2006) noted that a key function of stories in terms of communication is:

Each new story acts as a tendril tying us to the past, making the present significant, and giving shape to the future. In this way, a story from the past can be joined to other stories, help us establish connections with people, and inform future behavior. (p. 4).

***Constituent pride.*** Seven of 11 (64%) participants employed storytelling as a strategy to enhance the levels of pride and respect within their university constituencies. Descriptive words used to portray this thematic strategy included stories for the public, community, constituents, pride, qualifications, and influence. Participant responses associated with storytelling to increase constituent pride included the following:

We want our constituency and our potential constituency to see that our institution is a place where people begin a new story in their lives. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

We believe that by systematically and intentionally telling our story—to ourselves first and then to our other constituencies—, we will encourage others to come and join in our efforts. (Participant J, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

Telling stories is a personal interaction that puts a face on a large and seemingly intimidating educational institution. It is easy to forget that the

university is people—one at a time making a difference. Telling stories helps alumni remember and be proud. Potential donors become engaged and become concerned supporters. Also, those telling the stories are reminded of the really good things that happen and their impact on those around them. These sorts of activities are the lifeblood that keeps a large institution real and leads to the accrual of friends and supporters. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

The literature review provided a quality example of how telling stories can help to capture the attention, hearts, and minds of an organizational constituency and promote its involvement and action. Mai and Akerson (2003) proposed that stories told within organizations to encourage change should be action oriented, connect the listeners to a shared set of values, cast the organization's people as characters, cast the competition as the adversary, depict the past as a introduction to a new story, expose the present as the beginning of a search to fulfill a new dream, and reveal the future as a place where goals are accomplished and transformed.

***Truthful.*** The participants' use of truthful accounts in their storytelling as a strategy was listed by 7 of 11 participants (64%) in this study. Telling true stories is a major strategy used by higher education leaders to increase university prestige. The theme of truthful was developed by observing the following key descriptors: real, authentic, and personal. Examples of how the strategic use of truthful stories was evidenced in the data are included in the following participant responses:

We tell stories of success about students, faculty, employers, alumni, etc. We tell stories of achievement in the midst of difficult obstacles. We tell stories about

how student's lives were changed by our programs. We tell stories about employers and what they say about our students. We tell stories about the "good" that our students are doing in the name of Jesus Christ across the globe.

(Participant A personal communication, May 5, 2011)

Much of our effort over the time I've been here has been to improve that part of what we do. We have stories to tell that relate to the qualifications and achievements of our faculty and staff, and we have begun formally collecting what we call "Student Success Stories," frequently by having former students simply tell the story of their lives since graduation. These and similar efforts collectively have the effect of telling a cohesive story of the institution as a whole: who we are, what we believe, what we do, and where we do it. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

Almost always the stories are about people. These people may be faculty or students, but sometimes they are others that are influenced and impacted by our faculty and students. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

McKinnon (2006) suggested stories could be effective in addressing change in organizations if the storyteller is "willing to be human. Telling authentic stories or acting them out can strengthen respect and cooperation, inspire courage and fresh insights, and affirm employees' emotional connections to the organization" (p. 106).

***Using facts.*** Another storytelling strategy rising from the data was the use of facts in storytelling. Using facts was referred to by 6 of 11 participants (55%). Many leaders in higher education use factual and statistical references as needed in storytelling to help

promote their universities. Key words used to help identify this major theme included statistics, rankings, and factual. Statements relating to this theme included the following:

We tell factual stories about the success of our alums. Issues of integrity and fact must be at the base of all the stories. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

It's important for faculty and staff to realize that how other universities view a school figures into the national rankings from various sources. We need to be more aware of getting our stories out to our own community, our region, and other universities in other parts of the country. While we might not like ranking systems, they are important to attracting and keeping good students and attracting and keeping donors. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

Depending on the circumstances, I might include statistics (size of the college, number of programs, etc.), but that information is more for orientation and introduction purposes. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

The literature supports the need for the use of facts in change initiatives within institutions of higher education. Winstead (1982) suggested change processes should be well-founded on knowledge and research. The statistical ratings and facts associated with the competition involved with higher education should be included in an institution's story. Bok (2003) noted that the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings, while notoriously unreliable, are the most tangible expression of academic prestige presently offered.

***University mission.*** A final major theme found to be a strategy involves the use of storytelling to explain and remind listeners' of an institution's established mission. Six of

11 respondents (55%) made mention of this theme. Words used to develop this theme included university mission and purpose, important, focus, dreams, and goals. Participant statements related to this theme include:

Storytelling in this sense is a very important part in getting the message out relative to our institution that equates to prestige in terms of what is really important to us. (Participant H, personal communication, April 26, 2011)

We talk about the kind of successes at this institution as well as others that share the focus of our mission. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

I prefer stories that will help our students and graduates achieve their dreams and goals....Our true "prestige" is the quality of our graduates. (Participant G, personal communication, April 29, 2011)

Gilley et al. (1986) suggested a major component of an organizational story involves the dedication of its staff to the institution. They highlighted that in seeking to further an institution of higher education, it is vital to have a shared sense of purpose in the strategic mission of the university. As individual and institutional goals are fulfilled, greater respect is gained and faculty, staff, and students take a new pride in the institution.

**Research question 2 summary.** Responses to research question 2 produced several major themes. These themes were supported by the academic literature and served to exemplify storytelling strategies used by higher education leaders to lead change in university prestige. The first theme suggested leaders employ stories that are applicable to the person listening or to the organization. Boje (1991) suggested the

applicable nature of stories is powerful in organizations because organizational stakeholders “tune into stories as real-time data and tell stories to predict, empower, and even fashion change” (p. 124). Research participants evidenced storytelling as a strategy to help connect the listeners to the story both emotionally and intellectually. Treleaven (2001) suggested stories “facilitate connections between a storyteller’s past and imagined futures, creating potential for new ways of being and acting in the world” (p. 267).

Participants in this study demonstrated the use storytelling to build strategically constituent pride. Bornstein (2003) noted, “It is through the telling and retelling of the institution’s story that constituents from all groups become excited, challenged, and engaged” (p. 129). Research participants proposed that telling a truthful story was an important storytelling strategy. The value found in using storytelling by university leaders is greatly enhanced by telling truthful and authentic stories. Cashman (2008) depicted leadership as authentic influence that produces value. Participants not only suggested telling truthful stories as a strategy, but also relayed how they use facts to help in increasing the level of institutional prestige. Weiner (2009) stated that although the academic community does not view rankings as reliable, its members understand that these rankings continue to play a key role in the decision process of students in search of higher education as well as in faculty evaluating professional opportunities. Strategically reminding and sharing stories related to the mission of the university was the final theme found in this research question. Boyce (1995) proposed stories provide listeners an opportunity to be made aware of an organization’s shared sense of meaning and purpose.

**Research question 3 findings.** Research question 3 sought to answer: How are framing, sensemaking, and restorying evidenced? Several major themes were identified

through this question, as they were found in more than 55% of participant responses. Two themes found relating to the concept of framing were introduction and excellence. The two major themes connected with the concept of sensemaking were authentic and understanding. Two final themes found in this question were associated with restorying and were labeled as memorable and replicable.

***Framing and excellence.*** Higher education leaders often use the concept of framing to help establish understanding of an institution's current reality. Seven of 11 respondents (64%) portrayed framing by telling stories that shared a common theme of excellence. Words used to help identify this theme within the data included ranking, high-level, prestigious, and award. The following excerpts exemplify participant responses in this theme:

We are also constantly telling our story about being ranked as the number one “up and coming” university to watch by *U.S. News*. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

I like to show pictures and other documents, like conference proceedings, so that the board members can see how our students are competing at a high level with prestigious universities from around the nation. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

When we tell her story to prospective students, and especially their parents, they are inspired by her example as well as impressed that we are a university whose students are people of quality who can compete at the highest level. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)



The literature review produced an example of the importance of using story to help frame an expectation of excellence. While skepticism surrounds the precision of rating and ranking systems, it is countered in Sweitzer and Volkwein's (2009) assertion that these ratings are in fact important to universities as they seek to position themselves in the highly competitive higher education marketplace.

***Framing and introduction.*** A second major theme involving framing was found to be the use of storytelling to help introduce an institution, a change, or a new vision. This theme was offered by 6 of 11 participants (55%). Key words and phrases related with this theme included incoming students, prospective, orientation, and get to know us. The following statements are examples of how participants demonstrated this theme:

We need to be more aware of getting our stories out to our own community, our region, and other universities in other parts of the country. While we might not like ranking systems, they are important to attracting and keeping good students and attracting and keeping donors. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

I have used that story to describe the ethic I want for all parents and new students as they get to know us. (Participant F, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

When we tell her story to prospective students, and especially their parents, they are inspired by her example as well as impressed that we are a university whose students are people of quality who can compete at the highest level. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

Several examples of how framing in storytelling can be used to introduce an organization, a transformation effort, cast a new vision, or establish common ground were also found. Weick (2001) proposed, “Stories remind people of key values on which they are centralized. When people share the same stories, those stories provide general guidelines within which they can customize diagnoses and solutions to local problems” (p. 341).

***Sensemaking and understanding.*** The Sensemaking and understanding theme was mentioned by 6 of 11 participants (55%). Higher education leaders use stories to help listeners’ make sense of what is going on, but more acutely to help them understand the institution’s story. The descriptive words used to help identify this theme included describe, example, good stories and storytellers, and reminders. Sensemaking and understanding are evidenced by the following participant responses.

In reports to the education committee of the Board of Trustees, instead of using facts and statistics, I’ve been telling stories of our students who are presenting at national conferences and faculty members who have been mentoring these students. I like to show pictures and other documents, like conference proceedings, so that the board members can see how our students are competing at a high level with prestigious universities from around the nation. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

The story of our institution receiving the national “presidential volunteer service award” for our students being involved in so many facets of success serving others while receiving a quality education and that these things can be

accomplished by dedicated faculty AND funds to make this happen. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

When we tell her story to prospective students, and especially their parents, they are inspired by her example as well as impressed that we are a university whose students are people of quality who can compete at the highest level. When we tell her story to donors, they likewise are impressed that an institution that can attract and prepare students of this quality must be an institution worthy of their support. Just saying that we have internships at the national level does not carry the same power. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

The theme of sensemaking and understanding is supported in the scholarly literature. Mai and Akerson (2003) noted that stories that help people make sense of change typically let people know “where the organization is going, why the change is necessary and important, what specific steps will need to be taken, how people can help make the change a success, and what’s in it for them” (p. 70).

***Sensemaking and authentic.*** In order for stories to assist in helping listener’s make sense, higher education leaders suggested that stories also be authentic. Six of the 11 (55%) respondents acknowledged the importance of authenticity in storytelling. Descriptive words found in the data used to develop this theme included genuine, without misleading, personal, truthful, and from the heart. The following excerpts from participant responses help to support this theme:

We are currently telling the story and learning how to tell the story without being misleading....The stories must be genuine and not misleading. There is always a

temptation to “stretch” the story to make your programs look better. (Participant A, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

Having the ability to talk from the heart is essential. (Participant I, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

We recently had a student receive a prestigious funded internship at the national level, and we have been amazed by the power of her story. Her family came to this country from Central America, and she is taking seriously the task of getting a good education while pursuing her faith and her career goals. When we tell her story to prospective students, and especially their parents, they are inspired by her example as well as impressed that we are a university whose students are people of quality who can compete at the highest level. When we tell her story to donors, they likewise are impressed that an institution that can attract and prepare students of this quality must be an institution worthy of their support. Just saying that we have internships at the national level does not carry the same power. (Participant J, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

The thematic concept of sensemaking and authenticity addresses an important element of leadership. Many higher education leaders aspiring to influence authentically people with a desire of creating institutional value have utilized storytelling. Bennis (1996) argued, “Effective leaders put words to the formless longings and deeply felt needs of others. They create communities out of words. They tell stories that capture minds and win hearts” (p. 160).

***Restorying and memorable.*** Participants mentioned the importance of stories being memorable in hopes of assisting with restorying efforts. Seven of 11 (64%)

participants supplied responses detailing the memorable elements of storytelling. Words found in the data and used to connect restorying and memorable as a theme included memorable, unforgettable, amazing, impactful, and future. Participant responses associated with this theme included the following:

Instead of using facts and statistics, I've been telling stories of our students who are presenting at national conferences and faculty members who have been mentoring these students. I like to show pictures and other documents, like conference proceedings, so that the board members can see how our students are competing at a high level with prestigious universities from around the nation. Some other reports they seem to forget, but I hear them telling other board members those stories. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

I prefer the stories of common occurrences; chance moments of caring, of fears allayed and hearts won. Those are the stories that move my school forward. (Participant F, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

Planting these seeds will make a difference in the future....Telling stories helps alumni remember and be proud. Potential donors become engaged and become concerned supporters. Also, those telling the stories are reminded of the really good things that happen and their impact on those around them. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

Storytelling can have positive impact, as it provides a memorable context for an organization and its people to begin a new story. Denning (2007) proposed that stories can help convey the rationale for change by including the following: (a) the story of the transformation, as seen through the eyes of some representative characters who will be

impacted by the change; (b) the story of how the change will be employed , showing step-by-step how the organization will get move where it is to where it wants to be; and (c) the story of why the change will succeed, showing the fundamental methods that make the change practically unavoidable.

***Restorying and replicable.*** The second theme related to the concept of restorying entails the replicable nature of the story by the presenter and the listeners. The theme of restorying and replicable was found in 6 of 11 participant responses (55%). Key words used to help identify this theme included others telling, retold, and used often. Excerpts from participant responses related to this theme include the following:

We want our constituency and our potential constituency to see that our institution is a place where people begin a new story in their lives....Some other reports they seem to forget, but I hear them telling other board members those stories.

(Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

One recent story I have used often is about one of our alums who is blind and attended and graduated in the 1960s before ADA, etc. She overcame tremendous obstacles and became very successful. She states that much of her success is due to her university and the nurturing and helpful environment she encountered. This is a powerful story to use with incoming and current students.

(Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

I have re-told this story many times in business circles as one affirmation in support of our students and graduates. (Participant G, personal communication, April 29, 2011)

Stories that are worth repeating are invaluable to an organization. The literature supports the telling and retelling of an organizational story as a means to assist in promoting organizational change. Boje (1991) posited that members of storytelling organizations continually impart and refine the stories of their existing circumstances while also reinterpreting the long-established stories embedded within the organization's culture. The old organizational stories are retold at times of decision making so as to minimize duplication of organizational errors and to encourage the repetition of constructive experiences.

**Research question 3 summary.** The data cultivated in research question 3 produced several major themes associated with the concepts of framing, sensemaking, and restorying. Each of these themes was supported by relevant quotes found in the literature review. Participating higher education leaders exemplified that sharing descriptive stories of institutional excellence is a way to help in framing the current realities of the university and helping to set the stage for organizational change designed to increase prestige. In light of this theme, it is important to note that Bok (2003) depicted the modern university as being dynamic with academic distinction, or prestige, as the chief aim. The research participants also exclaimed the value of framing in storytelling, as it aids in introducing an institution, a change initiative, or cast a new vision. Gargiulo (2006) noted that stories give power to a presenter and create a setting where they can catch the listeners' attention, serve as a stage for learning, and develop a rapport between the narrator and the listener.

Research participants also mentioned sensemaking and understanding as a major component of storytelling. Leaders use stories to facilitate the listeners' ability to make

sense of what is going on, and provide understanding of the institution's desired new story. Daft (2008) stated, "Telling stories helps people make sense of complex situations, inspires action, and brings about change in ways that other forms of communication cannot" (p. 279). The participating university leaders also recognized the significance of authenticity in storytelling. For stories to help listener's make sense of an institutional change program, respondents suggested that the stories and storytellers be genuine. Cashman (2008) stated, "World class leadership operates at the dynamic junction of personal authenticity and interpersonal connection" (p. 82).

Research participants provided responses depicting the memorable nature of stories. Stories that are memorable add value in the restorying phase of an institutional change. Denning (2007) suggested that one of the underlying principles that aids in governing efforts to stimulate desire for change is that the communication tool must make the idea memorable. The data also evidenced the replicable nature of stories as a source of the organizational restorying process. Participants suggested there is great benefit to the institution as a story encouraging change in university prestige is told and retold. Boje (1991) also noted that in a chaotic organizational setting, the stories told assist in creating an environment in which the mind becomes capable of visualizing a new and more positive vision and reality for the organization.

### **Additional Findings of Interest**

Some findings did not meet the criteria to be considered a major theme. However, there were two findings mentioned in enough participant responses to deem them notable. The following sections detail minor thematic findings as identified in the data. These are



summarized below and presented along with corresponding participant statements and support found in the literature.

**Public relations (including ranking).** Five of 11 (45%) respondents noted the role of storytelling in public relations efforts related to national rankings and university reputation. The following excerpts offer a sampling of the types of responses associated with storytelling and the national ranking and rating systems:

We just received notification from *U.S. News and World Report* last month that our Masters of Accountancy program was rated number 1 in the nation for placing graduates within 90 days of graduation against all other graduate business programs in the U.S.... We are also constantly telling our story about being ranked as the number one “up and coming” university to watch by *U.S. News*.

(Participant A, Personal Communication, May 5, 2011)

It’s important for faculty and staff to realize that how other universities view a school figures into the national rankings from various sources. We need to be more aware of getting our stories out to our own community, our region, and other universities in other parts of the country. While we might not like ranking systems, they are important to attracting and keeping good students and attracting and keeping donors. (Participant C, personal communication, April 30, 2011)

The literature related to storytelling and university rankings is limited, but the impact of the rating systems is consistently discussed in the literature. Kerr (1991) suggested that although rankings are not a science, as they rely on personal judgments and opinion, their influence on the university reputations can be an institution’s greatest asset.

**Potency of storytelling.** Four of 11 (36%) participant responses illustrated the potency of storytelling in higher education leadership. Statements associated with this minor theme included:

I wish I did it better and more effectively, as I know it would enhance the messages I am hoping to convey. (Participant B, personal communication, April 17, 2011)

I would just say that I find storytelling to be one of the most effective ways to get our message across to all constituents. Everyone likes a good story. (Participant E, personal communication, May 7, 2011)

These sorts of activities are the lifeblood that keeps a large institution real and leads to the accrual of friends and supporters. (Participant K, personal communication, April 19, 2011)

This concept is also supported throughout the literature. Discussing organizations and change, Tichy (2002) stated, “The best way to get humans to venture into unknown terrain is to make that terrain familiar and desirable by taking them their first in their imaginations” (p. 219). Simmons (2006) declared, “Learning to influence through story dramatically improves the leverage of your efforts” (p. 108) and “story has a quality of graciousness that bypasses power struggles” (p. 108).

## **Conclusions**

A summary of the findings discovered in this study provides a framework for drawing conclusions. Three major themes were identified throughout the data and the literature in relation to storytelling as a strategy for leading change in university prestige: sensemaking, framing, and restorying. Sensemaking was noted as a critical component of

storytelling as it relates to aiding in the understanding of institutional realities, changes, and direction. Framing through storytelling provides a guide for introducing an institution, a change initiative, and helps to paint a mental picture of the present state of a university. Restorying is evidenced in the course of storytelling as individuals hear a story, remember its key elements, apply the message, and retell the story to support a new way of conducting organizational life. According to Reissner (2008), “The interplay between change, organizational learning, sense-making, and narrative and story-telling is vital to explain how organizations learn in times of profound change” (p. 207).

In an effort to increase the institution’s reputation, brand, and in due course, its influence on humanity, higher education leaders passionately seek strategies to guide their universities to an increased level of prestige. Toma (2009) noted that universities determined in their pursuit to increase prestige have demonstrated a failure to employ anything but a rather generic set of strategies for change. Fineman et al. (2010) proposed that organizations utilize storytelling as a strategy in a number of ways, including:

(a) as part of an organization’s sense-making apparatus; (b) as a feature of organizational politics, attempts at control, and resistance; (c) as symbolic artifacts expressing deep mythological archetypes; (d) as performances aimed at influencing hearts and minds; and (e) as a means of disseminating knowledge and learning. (p. 439)

Storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige noted by participants and evidenced by their stories were identified as applicable, connective, constituent pride, truthful, using facts, and university mission. Each of these strategies can be conceptually placed in a category affiliated with this study’s three major themes.

Sensemaking was depicted as an important element of storytelling, as it helps the listener to understand and find meaning within the complexity of an institution of higher education. Pfahl and Wiessner (2007) noted, “Storytelling involves making meaning by seeing new relationships and patterns of thought. Using storytelling intentionally offers a powerful strategy for helping targeted populations of learners articulate, choose, and commit to more effective life options” (p. 11). The strategies affiliated with the theme of sensemaking, as evidenced in the study, included truthful and university mission. The participants suggested the stories told should be authentic, real, personal, and help to promote the mission and vision of the institution. The data projected that truthful stories told to enhance the university mission help listeners to make sense of change initiatives and encourage institutional stakeholders to keep the organization’s ultimate purpose at the forefront of their thoughts and actions.

Framing was identified as a major component of storytelling, as it serves in setting the stage for the university leader to present the details surrounding the institution’s current circumstances and the rationale for organizational change. Weick (2001) depicted the value of stories in framing an organizational impasse by stating, “Stories remind people of key values on which they are centralized. When people share the same stories, those stories provide general guidelines within which they can customize diagnoses and solutions to local problems” (p. 341).

Strategies associated with the theme of framing, as found in the study, included connective and using facts. Respondents posited that fundamentals of framing in storytelling include the introduction of the university, the change plan, and a demonstration of institutional excellence. Higher education leaders can utilize the

strategies of connective and using facts separately or together, as they provide the storyteller an avenue to find emotional and intellectual connection with the audience and help in providing a framework for implementing change.

Research participants recognized restorying to be a critical part of using storytelling as a strategy because it illustrates the tangible aspects of the narrative that help to solidify the new institutional story. Storytelling strategies associated with restorying were acknowledged to be applicable and constituent pride. Leaders looking to lead change in university prestige should employ stories that are easily remembered, will leave an impression, are capable of being retold, and encourage transformation. According to Farmer (1990), “Innovations introduced in a college or university should assist in translating its strategic vision into reality. Meaningful change is much more than merely cosmetic it is tantamount to renewal...and involves transforming the culture of an organization” (p. 7). Applicable and unforgettable stories offer a call to action for university constituencies that aids in creating a new level of engagement, involvement, and commitment to the university while promoting transformation and support for the desired new reality. Table 8 presents a model of storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige, as evidenced in the stories told by the research participants and found in the literature.

Table 8

*A Model of Storytelling Strategies for Leading Change in University Prestige*

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Sensemaking

Authentic

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*(continued)*

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## Sensemaking

Truthful

Understanding

Promote University Mission

Framing	Restorying
Connective	Applicable
Excellence	Constituent Pride
Introductory	Memorable
Using Facts	Replicable

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The storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige, as illustrated in this model, are in alignment with Weick (2001), who stated that stories are important to help “register, summarize, and allow reconstruction of scenarios that are too complex for logical linear summaries to preserve” (p. 341). This model may serve as a potential model for higher education leaders seeking to use storytelling as a strategy for leading change initiatives for increased university prestige.

### **Implications Based on Findings**

The findings from this study offered information related to the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. The findings for this study suggest implications for the field of organizational change, for higher education leaders, and for universities.

**Implications for the field of organizational change.** According to Burnes (2004), “Change is a constant feature of organizational life and the ability to manage it is

seen as a core competence of successful organizations” (p. 309). The results of this study add to the body of literature associated with the field of organizational change. The disciplines most likely impacted by this study include: (a) storytelling and leadership, (b) higher education leadership, (c) organizational change in higher education, and (d) strategic planning in higher education.

This research study provided a deeper understanding of the role storytelling can play in organizational change. Change is difficult in any organization, and the practice of using storytelling as a strategy to help lead change can ease the communication of change, as story aids in framing the need for change, making sense of what is taking place, and in gaining commitment to an organization’s new story. The Storytelling Strategies for Leading Change in University Prestige Model describes the three conceptual themes produced in this study and provides a foundation for the elements of storytelling that further change initiatives to increase prestige.

**Implications for the university.** The use of storytelling in organizational change has been documented and studied thoroughly as it pertains to a variety of organizations. However, there have been few academic studies detailing organizational change within higher education institutions. Even fewer studies discuss the utilization of storytelling as a strategy for leading change within institutions of higher education in order to increase prestige. Keller (1983) suggested that American higher education is facing a new era that requires improved planning, strategic decision making, and more intentional change. Keller noted that to achieve this type of shift, colleges and universities need to develop new procedures, approaches, and organizational composition. Farmer (1990) proposed the internal and external pressures for change in higher education have produced an

atmosphere more favorable for “colleges and universities to ask which changes they must make, rather than whether or not changes will be required” (p. 7).

In institutions of higher education, resistance to change is often generated by a fear of the professional unknown and often change plans are disrupted by a lack of communication between university constituencies (Winstead, 1982). In light of this, Ylijoki (2005) proposed, “Creating, telling and negotiating stories and narratives is a key process through which members make sense of events and experiences within a given organizational context and through which they form their professional identities” (p. 558). Denning (2007) suggested the more useful communication tools tend to be stories. Bakhtin and Holquist (1981) proposed dialogue as a communication tool helps prepare an organization to find a footing and base for implementation of change.

Ramaley and Holland (2005) created a five-element framework to lessen the opposition to change in higher education: (a) build a compelling case for change, (b) create clarity of purpose, (c) work in a scholarly mode at a significant scale, (d) develop a conducive campus environment, and (e) understand change. Storytelling can serve as a means to help make a case for the necessity of change, paint a picture of the purpose and direction the organization intends to go, and assist in providing a common ground for understanding the change. According to Simmons (2006), “Story makes sense of chaos and gives people a plot. One of the ways that story influences people is that a story can reframe frustration, suffering, or extra effort as meaningful” (p. 37).

**Implications for the higher education leaders.** This study discovered the storytelling strategies used by leaders in higher education to guide institutional change efforts to increase prestige. The data collected from the responses of the participating



university presidents, provosts-vice presidents, and academic deans combined with the literature review provided a model for using storytelling as a change strategy for other higher education leaders.

Keller (1983) proposed a common inspiration for change is the visionary and far-sighted urging for transformation that comes from a prominent university leader such as the university president, academic vice president, or key faculty members. Farmer (1990) suggested it is the duty of the university leadership to create an atmosphere conducive to innovation and an organizational culture that expects change to occur. McKinnon (2006) suggested that storytelling can be beneficial in organizational change if utilized to create a vision that others would want to pursue, establish the current state of an organization, affirm what will not change, prove an organization is capable of transforming, clarify purpose, establish shared meaning, broaden perceptions, and inspire courage.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Higher education institutions, as with all organizations, face an unknown future and must develop strategies to help prepare the university for the changes that lie ahead. Burnes (2004) suggested, "Change is a constant feature of organizational life and the ability to manage it is seen as a core competence of successful organizations" (p. 309). Organizations repetitively face the topic of change, and leading change is a topic explored often within the academic community. Global competition, cost pressures, advances in technology, and increasing consumer expectations are seen to require organizational changes and demand employers to manage effectively these changes (Handy, 1989; Kanter, 1989; Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to identify the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. The collection of these storytelling strategies provides a framework for higher education leaders to review their own use of storytelling in strategic change initiatives and may also serve as a guide to help in the development of their own personal set of storytelling strategies for leading change.

As in any study there were a number of limitations associated with this study, including:

1. A relatively small number of university leaders participated in this study.
2. Participants represented a small sample of universities.
3. This study was limited to American colleges and universities.
4. Only nonprofit higher education institutions were observed in this study.
5. The sample population was limited to leaders in higher education with at least 1 year of leadership experience at the presidential, provost, vice president, or dean level.
6. The use of storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige is a relatively new concept and there is limited literature available.

Noting these limitations, this study produced findings that added to the body of literature in the field of organizational change, higher education, and higher education leadership. The following are recommendations for future research associated with the role of storytelling as a strategy for leading change in institutions of higher education:

1. Conduct a longitudinal study within a university or group of universities to assess the impact of storytelling on organizational change initiatives throughout a designated period of time.

2. Increase the size of the sample studied. The sample size utilized in this study consisted of 11 higher education leaders, and a larger sample size may provide additional insights.
3. Include other target populations related to higher education such as the faculty members and the midlevel administrators and staff members who may work closely with those most affected by institutional change.
4. Expand the study to include universities located in countries other than the United States of America.
5. Conduct research that would compare and contrast the use of storytelling as a strategy for leading change within universities in faith-based and secular institutions.
6. Conduct an intercultural study to determine if culture plays a role in the use of storytelling as a strategy for leading change.
7. Conduct a study that would target retired university leaders with more than 20 years experience to determine their use of storytelling as a strategy for leading change in higher education.
8. Conduct research that would compare and contrast the use of storytelling in strategically leading change efforts between American and international universities.
9. Conduct studies to determine strategic planning tactics and organizational change strategies within higher education institutions.

10. Per the noted additional findings found in this study, conduct an additional study to determine the use of storytelling as a strategy used by higher education leaders in public relations efforts to increase institutional rankings.
11. Given the turbulent economic times for higher education, conduct a study to determine how leaders use negative information within their storytelling.
12. Conduct a similar study but compare the use of storytelling in each regional accrediting body.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the conclusions and findings related to this study designed to determine the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. The chapter began with an overview of the study, including a brief summary of the background of universities and the pursuit of prestige as found in the literature review, a restatement of the study's purpose and research questions, a review of the data collection process, and a summation of the data analysis procedures.

The study utilized the DNA in conducting interviews to gather the qualitative data associated with narrative studies. The interview instrument consisted of semistructured questions and was administered through the use of a password protected Wiki. Eleven higher education leaders with the positional titles of president, provost-vice president, and academic dean were selected to be participants in this study through purposeful, snowball, and criterion sampling. The criteria established to be considered as a participant included: (a) having at least 1 year of experience as a senior leader at a university, (b) current employment in a leadership position at a regionally accredited

institution. and (c) current leadership position at a not-for-profit institution located within the United States of America.

The data were analyzed using Holloway's (1997) process as a guide and included the following steps: (a) ordering and organizing the collected material; (b) rereading the data; (c) breaking the material into manageable sections; (d) identifying and highlighting meaningful phrases; (e) building, comparing, and contrasting categories; (f) looking for consistent patterns of meanings; (g) searching for relationships and grouping categories together; (h) recognizing and describing patterns, themes, and typologies; and (i) interpreting and searching for meaning. A second rater was identified and utilized to assist in the coding of data and in determining the major themes. These major themes were organized by research question and were presented with supporting excerpts from participant responses and from the literature review.

The findings of the study and the literature review were combined to produce a Model of Storytelling Strategies for Leading Change in University Prestige. The conceptual framework found in the literature review and the data collected provided consistent major themes associated with the role of storytelling as a strategy for leading change in higher education. The major conceptual frames were identified as sensemaking, framing, and restorying.

Implications for the field of organizational change were presented. This study adds to the body of literature related to organizational change, but more specifically, to the disciplines of storytelling and leadership, higher education leadership, organizational change in higher education, and strategic planning in higher education. Implications for the university were proposed, as storytelling has shown to be beneficial in setting the

stage for institutional change, communication of the specific elements of the change, and as tool to help reduce the resistance to change so often found in higher education institutions. Implications were also demonstrated for higher education leaders seeking strategies to lead change efforts in their universities to increase prestige. It was shown that leaders in higher education can use storytelling to cast vision, prepare the institution for change, make sense of the necessary change, and help to establish a new way of conducting university business. In addition, recommendations for future research regarding storytelling as a strategy for leading change in universities were presented.

The purpose of this study was to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige. The data collected in this study revealed storytelling to be a powerful resource for leaders in higher education and an invaluable tool for those seeking to lead strategically change in university prestige. The use of storytelling as a strategy for leading change within institutions of higher education helps university constituencies make sense of change, frame the details surrounding change, and implement a new story and refocused vision for the institution.

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## APPENDIX A

### Informed Consent to Participate in Research

#### **Study Title**

*Storytelling Strategies for Leading Change in University Prestige*

#### **Participants**

Your permission is requested to voluntarily participate in a study conducted by Matt Paden, doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University, under the supervision of L. Hyatt, Ed.D., faculty advisor at Pepperdine University. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership. Your identification as a possible participant was based upon meeting the criterion of the research study. Participation in this study is voluntary.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige.

#### **Procedures**

As a participant in this research, you can expect the following to occur related to the study:

- (1) The interview will consist of four questions using technology that provides a secure avenue for responses.



- (2) You will be asked to answer questions regarding your experiences with the role storytelling has played in organizational change initiatives in institutions of higher education seeking to improve their level of prestige.
- (3) You will be asked questions in order to confirm that you meet the criteria to participate in this study
- (4) The responses to the questions will be kept in a secure file for a period of five years before being destroyed.
- (5) The responses to the questions will be kept in a secure file for a period of five years before being destroyed.
- (6) There will be an opportunity for you to review the transcript of the responses.
- (7) A summary of the findings will be available upon request.
- (8) Participants will be designated a code name and data will be analyzed in aggregate to provide for confidentiality.

### **Potential Risks and Discomforts**

The risks associated with participation in the study are considered minimal and by definition are no greater than those experienced in daily life. It also should be noted that you, as a participant, may decline to answer any questions or complete the interview at anytime without risk to you.

**Potential Benefits to Subjects and/or to Society**

Your participation in this study may afford you the opportunity to: (a) contribute to the understanding of storytelling as a strategy for leading change in higher education; b) gain additional understanding of your lived experiences by means of personal reflection during the interview process; (c) the results of this research may include the opportunity to contribute to the field of organizational change in higher education; and (d) offer information to leaders in institutions of higher education interested in increasing university prestige.

**Payment for Participation**

There is no payment for participation in this study.

**Confidentiality**

Your name will remain confidential. Confidentiality will be maintained through coding and by placing all documents in a locked file drawer to which only the investigator will have access. The investigator will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of the participant's records and your identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this project. The confidentiality of records will be maintained in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.

**Participation and Withdrawal**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point with no consequences.

**Identification of Investigators**

If you have questions regarding the study, please contact Matt Paden, Investigator, by phone at [REDACTED] or email at [matthew.paden@pepperdine.edu](mailto:matthew.paden@pepperdine.edu) or Dr. L. Hyatt, Faculty Advisor, by e-mail at [LHyatt@pepperdine.edu](mailto:LHyatt@pepperdine.edu).

**Rights of Research Subjects**

Participation is voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you have questions regarding the rights of research subjects, please contact Dr. L. Hyatt, Faculty Advisor, at [LHyatt@pepperdine.edu](mailto:LHyatt@pepperdine.edu) or the Pepperdine University Graduate and Professional School Institutional Review Board office at [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

**Signature of Research Subject**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to voluntarily participate and permit the use of identifying information obtained in this study. I have received a copy of this informed consent form which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research as described above.

---

Name of Subject

---

Signature of Subject

---

Date

**Signature of Investigator or Designee**

The subject is voluntarily giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

---

Name of Investigator or Designee

---

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

## APPENDIX B

## Protecting Human Research Participants Completion Certificate



## Protecting Human Research Participants Completion Certificate

## APPENDIX C

## Expert Panel Review Form

Instructions: Please indicate under the rating column whether the interview question is (1) relevant to the research question, (2) not relevant to the research question or (3) should be modified.

1. Research Question	1. Interview Question	Rating
How is storytelling defined by higher education leaders?	How would you describe the key elements of storytelling?	(1) Relevant (2) Not Relevant (3) Modify as shown

Modify as follows

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2. Research Question	2. Interview Question	Rating
What are the storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige?	How do you use storytelling to increase prestige at your institution?	Relevant Not Relevant Modify as shown

Modify as follows:

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3. Research Question	3. Interview Question	Rating
How are framing, sensemaking, and restorying evidenced?	Please tell me a story about increasing university prestige.	(1) Relevant (2) Not Relevant (3) Modify as shown

Modify as follows:

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Please use the following space to make additional comments concerning this research instrument:

## APPENDIX D

## Interview Protocol

Respondent \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned Code \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview \_\_\_\_\_ Time of

Interview \_\_\_\_\_

University \_\_\_\_\_

1. Introduction

- a. Thank participant.
- b. Describe purpose: The purpose of the study is to discover storytelling strategies for leading change in university prestige.
- c. Review with the participant the consent form, their right to vacate the study at anytime, and remind them their participation is voluntary.
- d. Instruct the participant on how to complete the consent form and where to send it.
- e. Ask if the participant has any questions or comments.

2. Complete criteria questionnaire

- f. Position Title
- g. Gender
- h. Highest level of education obtained/and from where
- i. Years as leader in higher education
- j. Years in current leadership position



- k. Years at current institution
  - l. Type of Institution (private or public)
  - m. Regional Accrediting Agency
3. Summary
- n. Discuss instructions for Dynamic Narrative Approach.
  - o. Explain the research instrument.
    - i. How would you describe the key elements of storytelling?
    - ii. How do you use storytelling to increase prestige at your institution?
    - iii. Please tell me a story about increasing university prestige.
    - iv. Do you have anything else to add that you believe would benefit this study?
  - p. Express gratitude for willingness to participate in the study.

## APPENDIX E

## Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

April 8, 2011

Matthew Paden  
230 Genoa Ave  
Lubbock, TX 79416

**Protocol #: E0111D13**

**Project Title: *Storytelling Strategies for Leading Change in University Prestige***

Dear Mr. Paden:

Thank you for submitting the revisions requested by Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools IRB (GPS IRB) for your study, *Storytelling Strategies for Leading Change in University Prestige*. The IRB has reviewed your revisions and found them acceptable. You may proceed with your study. The IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsrsite/guidelines/45cfr46.html> that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b) (2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

**Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101**, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

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 a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because 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 GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our 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 GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your 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 GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact me. On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,



Jean Kang, CIP  
Manager, GPS IRB & Dissertation Support  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education & Psychology  
6100 Center Dr. 5th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90045  
[jean.kang@pepperdine.edu](mailto:jean.kang@pepperdine.edu)  
W: 310-568-5753  
F: 310-568-5755

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Associate Provost for Research & Assistant Dean of Research, Seaver College  
Ms. Alexandra Roosa, Director Research and Sponsored Programs  
Dr. Yuying Tsong, Interim Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB  
Ms. Jean Kang, Manager, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB  
Dr. Laura Hyatt  
Ms. Christie Dailo